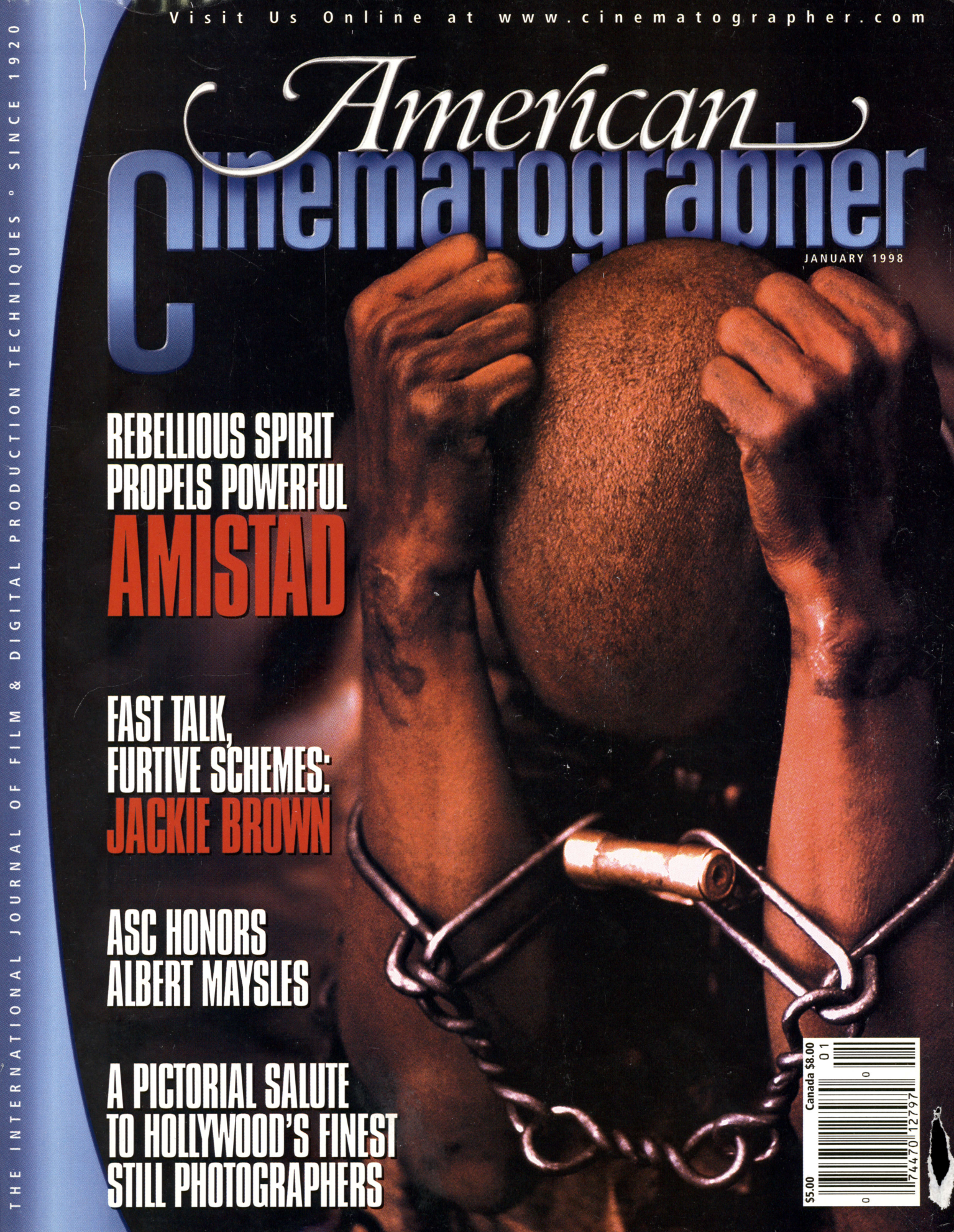
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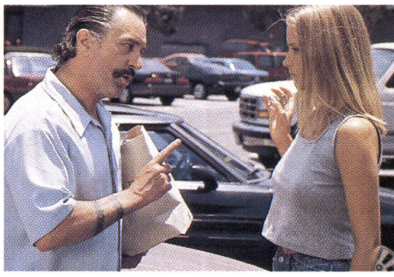
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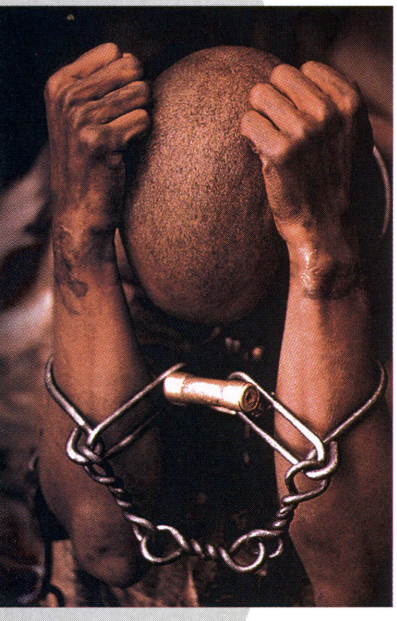
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On Our Cover:
An African man despairs after being sold into slavery in *Amistad*, an epic historical drama directed by Steven Spielberg and photographed by Janusz Kaminski, ASC (photo by Andrew Cooper, courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures).

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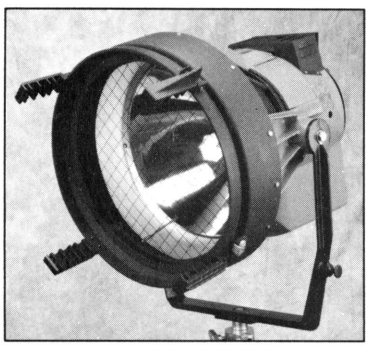
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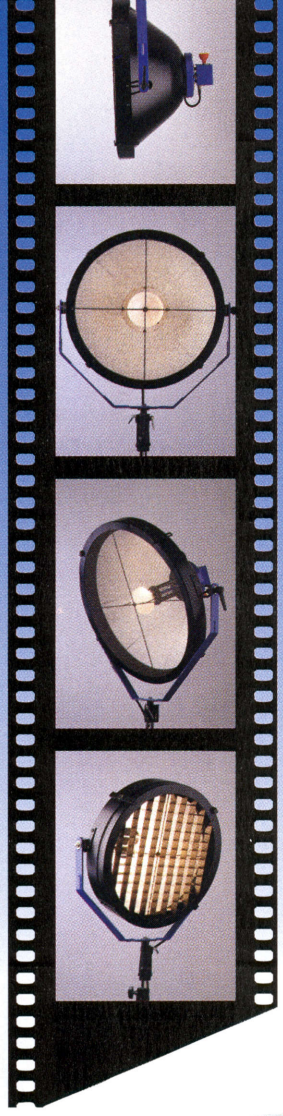
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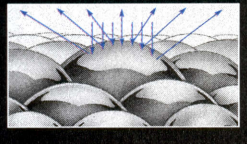
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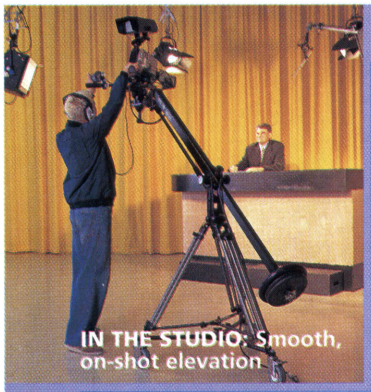
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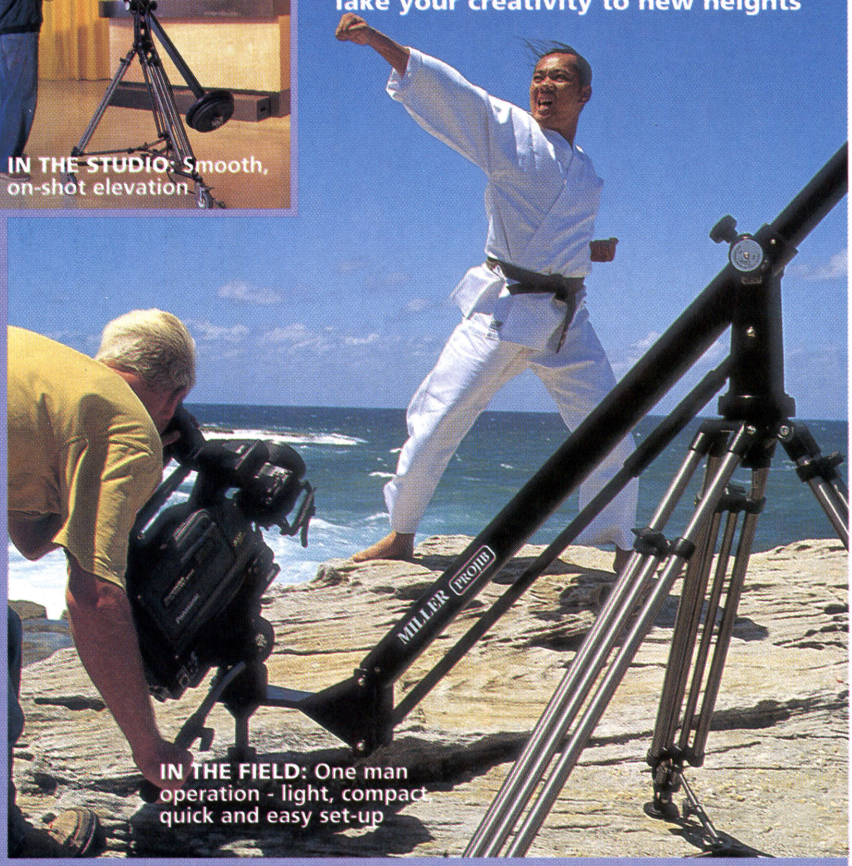
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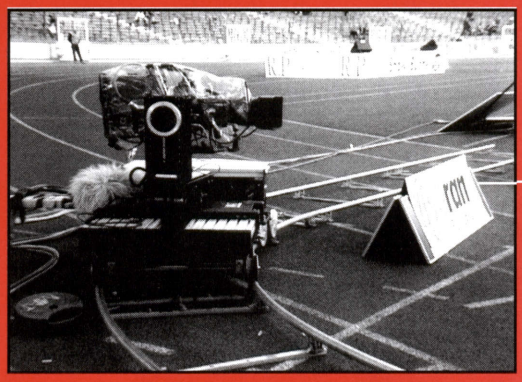
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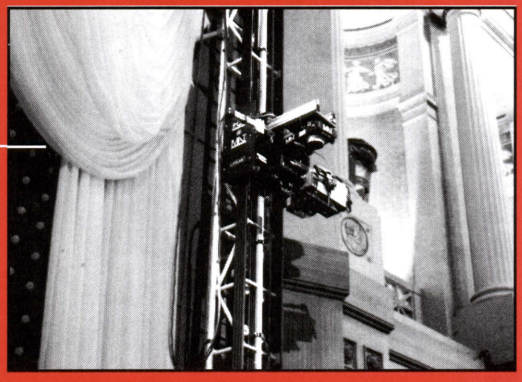
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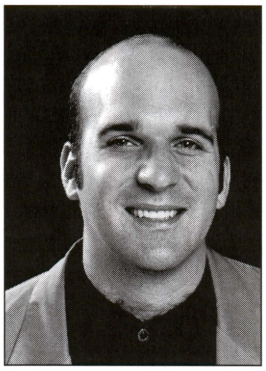
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Editor's Note

Dear *AC* reader,

As you have surely noticed, there is something distinctly different about this issue of *American Cinematographer:* splashier layouts, livelier fonts, a more vivid cover and logo. If you're still rubbing your eyes (or hauling yourself off the floor), we've achieved our goal.

That goal is to provide you, our loyal readership, with a sense of anticipation and excitement each time you pick up the magazine. Since 1920, *AC* has kept pace with the motion picture industry's very latest trends; this month, we've decided to set a few trends ourselves with a new and (we hope) innovative application of art direction and graphic design.



We know, we know. You *loved* the old *AC*. How could we do this without asking? What's the point in going on if the best things in life can change so suddenly?

Step back off that ledge, dear readers, and take a deep breath. Very good. Now take a closer look at the copy of *AC* you hold in your hands. Notice the beauty of our new approach: cleaner, more elegant lines; sharper, more detailed photographs; layouts that pop off the page. There's even a gatefold of stunning photographs by Hollywood's very best unit still photographers!

Soon enough, you'll realize that a good thing has just gotten better, thanks to the efforts of our indefatigable art director, Martha Winterhalter, and her expert accomplice, *Folio:* Award-winning freelance designer Alan Alpanian. Martha and Alan have worked long and hard to create a look which, in my opinion, rivals that of any magazine on the stands. I'd also like to thank the rest of the *AC* staff — publisher Jim McCullaugh, editors David Williams and Andrew Thompson, and ad sales executives Angie Gollmann, Mike Trerotoli and Alan Lowne — for helping us kick off 1998 with a truly impressive issue.

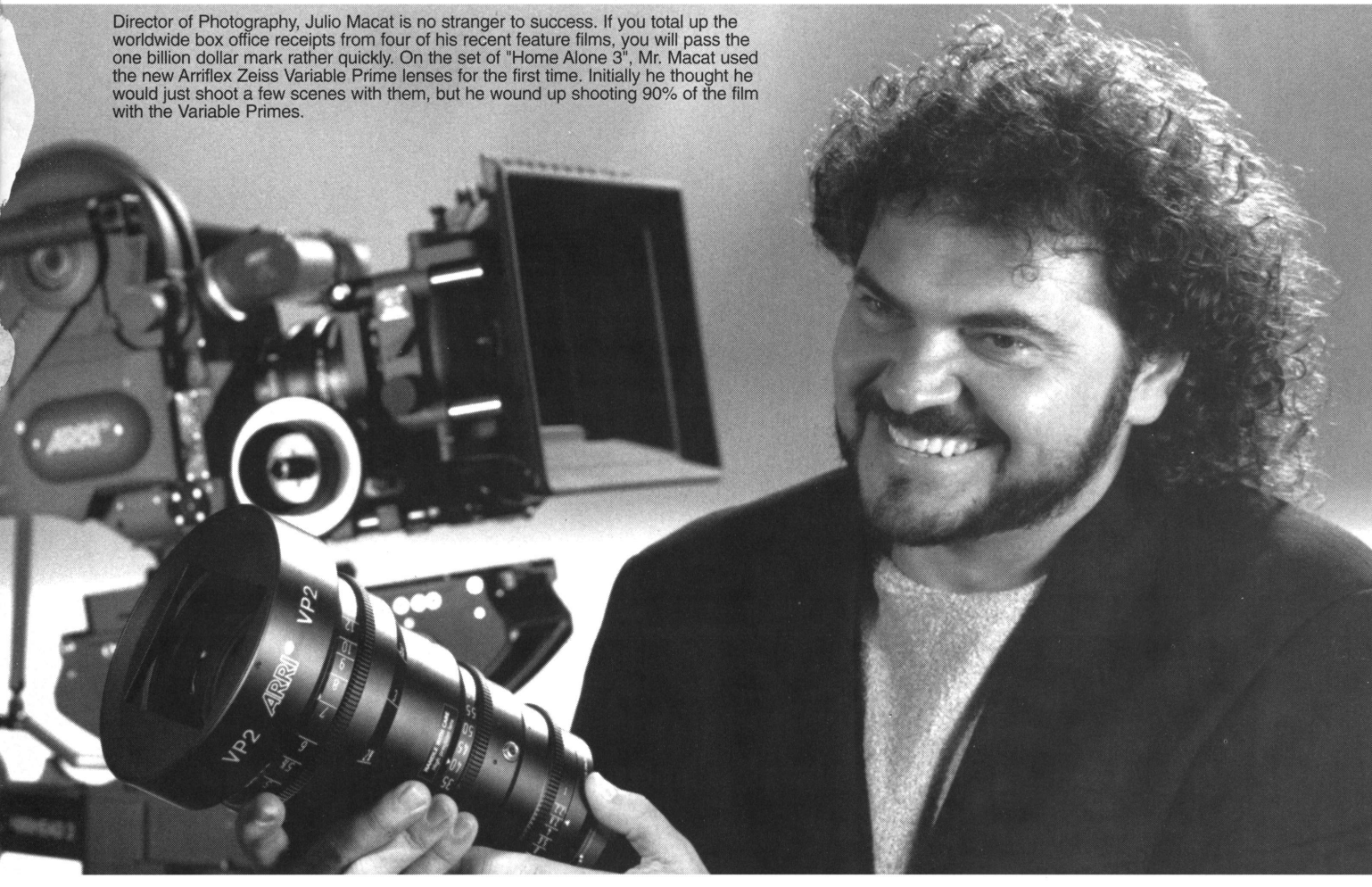
I'm confident that our striking new package (the first major redesign of *AC* since the November 1983 issue) will send you strolling to that newsstand or mailbox with some extra spring in your stride. As always, *AC* will continue to bring you the very best and most extensive coverage of the productions that really matter. Our editorial plans for the upcoming year are more ambitious than ever, and we remain committed to providing you with the types of comprehensive articles you simply can't find anywhere else.

Naturally, we'd love to hear your opinions about *AC*'s fresh direction. Feel free to write or e-mail us with your comments, and don't forget to visit us online at www.cinematographer.com!

Sincerely,

Stephen Pizzello
Executive Editor

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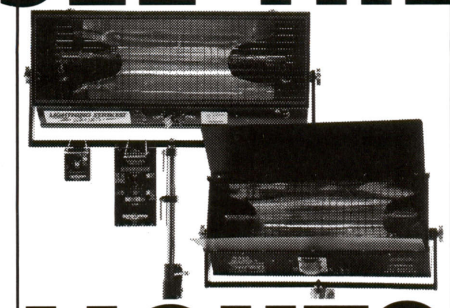
Director of Photography, Julio Macat is no stranger to success. If you total up the worldwide box office receipts from four of his recent feature films, you will pass the one billion dollar mark rather quickly. On the set of "Home Alone 3", Mr. Macat used the new Arriflex Zeiss Variable Prime lenses for the first time. Initially he thought he would just shoot a few scenes with them, but he wound up shooting 90% of the film with the Variable Primes.

"They're extraordinary lenses. Once they were mounted on the camera, they stayed there, particularly the 29-60mm VP2. Working with the Variable Primes gives you great advantages. When you're on a crane for example and need to adjust the frame slightly to compose the shot, the VPs make this process easy. That speeds up the production without sacrificing image quality. Everyone wants you to work fast. With the Variable Primes you can change the focal length without changing lenses. You have prime lens resolution and light sensitivity with the convenience of a zoom."

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The Post Process

Cintel's Upgrade Kit Turns Ursa Gold to Diamond

by Debra Kaufman

Cintel Inc., a U.K.-based company with stateside offices in Valencia, CA, recently announced the availability of its Diamond Upgrade Kit, which is designed to provide existing Ursa Gold telecines with the full capacities of Cintel's new Ursa Diamond telecines.

According to a Cintel spokesperson, four postproduction facilities — Nice Shoes and Moving Images in New York City, Encore Video in Santa Monica, and Postique in Detroit — have already installed Diamond upgrades, with 46 other customers in various stages of installation. The Diamond Upgrade Kit consists of four components: Diamond Set, Diamond Glow, Diamond Clear and Meta-Speed.

Diamond Set, Cintel's new Diamond Technology Front End and a standard feature of the Upgrade, addresses a previous problem with color drift. According to Cintel, Diamond Set "marks a significant improvement over Ursa Gold in the area of image noise and performance, virtually eliminating PEC drift, resulting in better repeatability of color corrections."

Diamond Set works with an intelligent burn and shading corrector to provide stability in colorimetry and extended CRT life. The user can choose between two options: Diamond Glow, a development of DAV's Accuglow, which has been designed specifically for the Ursa Diamond, or TWiGi, developed by Innovation TK (ITK).

Diamond Glow is a CRT burn-and-grain-reduction system that eliminates anomalies with burned CRTs and allows pan cuts without short-term CRT light-level changes. A Cintel spokesperson claims that Diamond Glow "could significantly extend the life of the CRT, resulting in reduced running costs over the life of the machine."

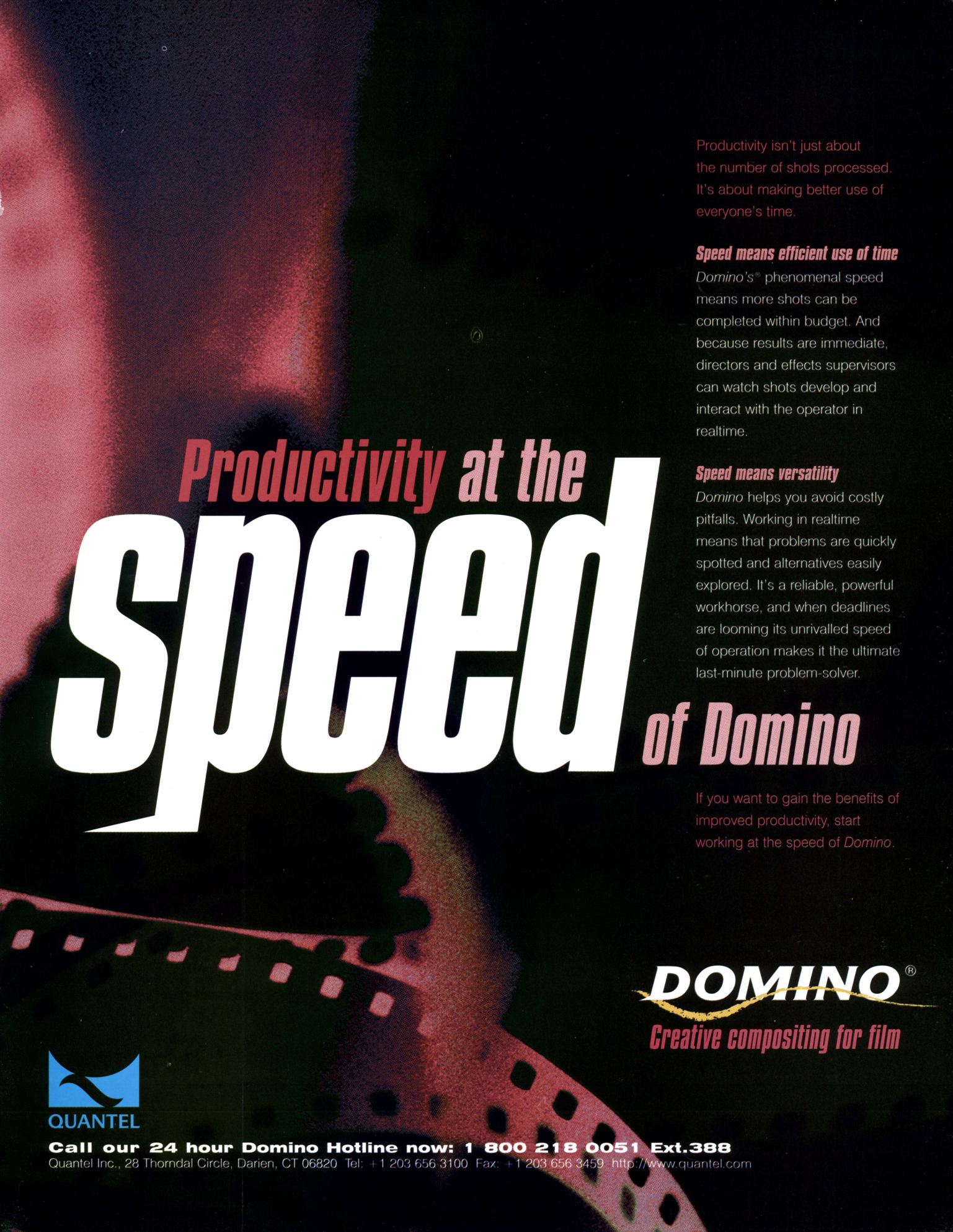
The second option, TWiGi, is an optical-electronic system which eliminates tube grain, tube lag effects, shading drift and grain fixed-pattern noise. TWiGi also makes transitions between burnt and unburnt parts of the tube phosphor completely invisible.

Another component of the Diamond Upgrade Kit deals with the problem of aliasing, visible as a moiré pattern, created by the television's interlaced line system. Cintel offers two alternative and innovative solutions to the aliasing problem for the Ursa Diamond: Diamond Clear from DAV and SCAN'dAL from Innovation TK.

To eliminate the aliasing caused by patterns found in such images as a car grille, a plaid jacket or venetian blinds, DAV's Diamond Clear system scans the film image at a higher line rate and then converts it to 525/625. Diamond Clear is an integral part of Ursa Diamond and can be controlled locally or from the telecine controller.

ITK's SCAN'dAL uses a different technique for eliminating aliasing. ITK's solution is to make the spot elliptical, maintaining horizontal resolution but increasing the spot size vertically so it can scan the lost information between the lines, thus reducing vertical aliasing.

For servo control in the Diamond Upgrade Kit, the user has Cintel's own JumpFree and LowSpeed, as well as Meta-Speed, which is a standard feature of the Ursa Diamond. JumpFree and LowSpeed provide VTR-like transport control and an extended range of operating speeds. Developed by Video Post &



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Transfer, Meta-Speed works in conjunction with JumpFree gates for digital precision in speed control. Meta-Speed also offers an extended multiple-speed range that includes technology enabling the transfer of 3-perf film with a 4-perf gate.

Completing the Diamond Upgrade Kit are two roller-arm assemblies to improve film wind and packing for 16mm and 35mm stock. The new roller arms, located close to the lead and take-up spools, are installed using existing screws, without drilling the deckplate, to create a film pack with no stepping effect at any film speed.

Postique senior colorist Eric Maurer, who is impressed with every aspect of the new Diamond Upgrade, singles out the Meta-Speed servo system for special praise. "The way it stabilizes in real time rivals pinning to some degree," he says. "Five years ago, everything had to be pinned, but today, with technology like Meta-Speed, I don't even think about it anymore."

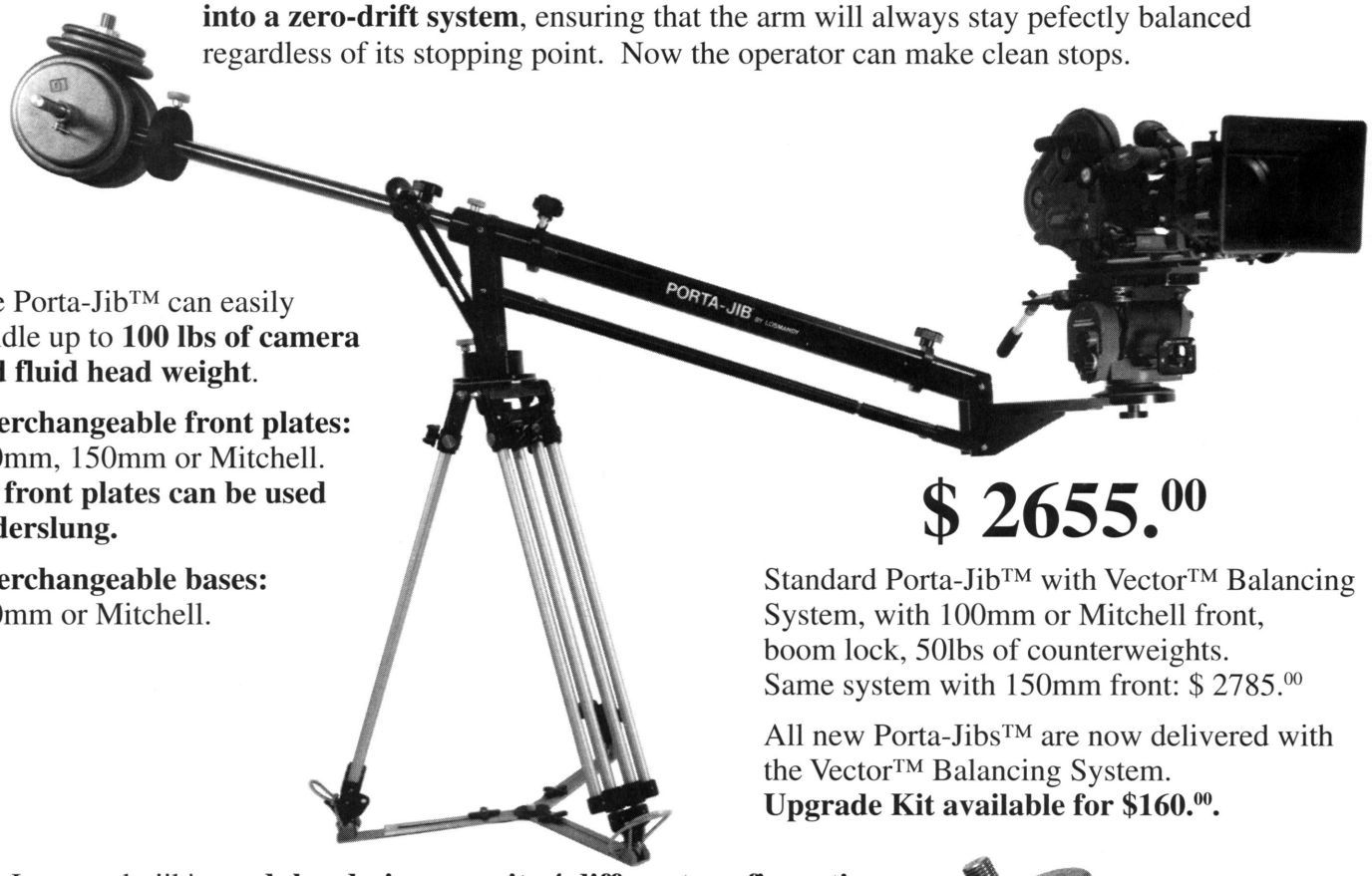
Encore Video's Bob Festa is enthusiastic about some aspects of the Diamond Upgrade, including TWiGI, which he calls "head-over-heels great," and the Diamond Clear anti-moiré tool, which he describes as the Upgrade's "most attractive feature." But he also harbors some concerns, citing a "lack of flexibility" with Diamond Clear, which he cannot control via remote from the Da Vinci, and calling Diamond Set "poorly implemented... and more unstable than its predecessor."

Since the Diamond Upgrade is in its early days of implementation, it stands to reason that Cintel will turn its attention to tweaking such problems, based on feedback from colorists. In the meantime, some Diamond users feel they already have exactly what they need. "This will eliminate any difference between the Spirit and the Ursa," declares Nice Shoes president Howie Burch, a longtime Ursa fan. "We used to say, 'We can do as good a job as someone else can on the Spirit, with certain exceptions' — because the Spirit had eliminated vertical jitter. Now we feel we can do as good a job as Spirit users all the way around." ■

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Production Slate

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson



Above: A club kid in costume cuts loose at New York's Limelight Club. Inset: Director Joy Corion. Right: A DJ deep in concentration at San Francisco's Sound Factory.

House Nation, Under One Groove

by Mark Dillon

First-time Toronto-based filmmaker Joy Corion wants to rap about house music: *Our House*, a documentary-in-progress from Corion's Positive Vibes Productions, sets out to clear up the misconceptions surrounding this genre of spiritual urban dance music.



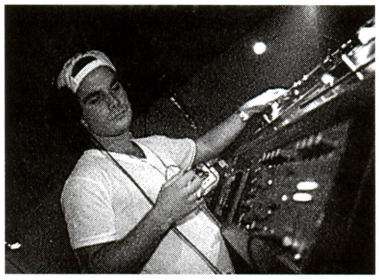
The lineage of house harkens back to mid-Seventies disco, which flourished until a vehement "disco sucks" backlash drove it off the playlists of radio stations and major clubs. Through interviews, file footage, and dance club sequences, Corion intends to trace house music's Eighties evolution in Chicago and New York basements, where independent artists conceived its hypnotic sound. Modern house has fueled a once-again thriving club scene, as well as the U.K.-bred phenomenon of after-hour warehouse parties known as "raves." Although the pioneers of house have received little recognition, their influence can be heard on dance remixes of songs by such artists as Madonna and U2.

Corion, a part-time house DJ and employee of the Toronto International Film Festival, conceived the idea for *Our House* in 1992. With financial assistance from Canadian arts grants, she has shot footage in several North American cities, timing her trips around such major events as New York City's New Music Seminar and Miami's Winter Music Conference. While attending these affairs, she filmed on-the-spot interviews, resulting in insightful, often hilarious off-the-cuff observations from the likes of famed house producer Frankie Knuckles and British singer Jimmy Sommerville of the Bronski Beat.

Our House's 8 1/2-minute promotional video opens with a young couple grooving to house at a New York Underground Network party. Altered frame rates speed up and slow down the action, lending the dancers' motion an energetic, sensual tone; the black-and-white stock used to capture the scene produces a high-contrast look as sharp spotlights reveal the duo's pulsating bodies in dramatic silhouette. With fast cuts from the dancers to the DJ, Corion offers a cinematic simulation of the nightclub experience.

In Toronto, Corion collaborated with local cinematographer Ricardo Diaz, CSC, a veteran of TV commercials and more than 100 music videos, many of the house genre. Experimenting with the Beta SP format, the duo filmed mostly in local dance spots — including Aztec and the now-defunct Boom Boom Room. The lighting fixtures brought along by Diaz, however, remained in their cases. The cinematographer explains, "We didn't really have the run of the clubs, so we had to go with available light: we couldn't disturb the dancers by plugging in lights and setting up. But [the club managers] did leave on some ambient light so we could get a bit of detail." Adds Corion, "One reason this genre has gone undocumented is because it happens mostly after midnight. When people are dancing and getting into a groove, they don't want a big light shining in their face. You have to arrive early and get them to do a few steps for you, or go around very quickly later on, and hopefully get some good footage."

In New York, Corion brought along Toronto-based director of photography Rob Garrard, who had spent six months in the Big Apple shooting the paparazzi documentary *Blast 'Em*. The

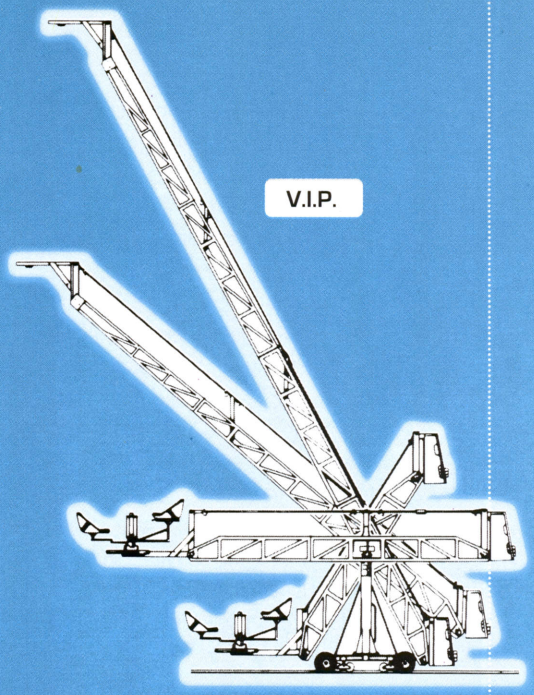


cameraman found working on *Our House* to be a quite different experience, particularly in terms of club entree. "New York was totally open when we shot *Blast 'Em*," Garrard recalls. "It was a big celebrity thing — if you were media, you could waltz into any party with *carte blanche* access. The situation changed with *Our House*, especially because in 'the underground,' celebrities weren't involved as much." Ironically, Garrard ran into very same security guards he encountered during production of *Blast 'Em*, only to be denied venue access this time around.

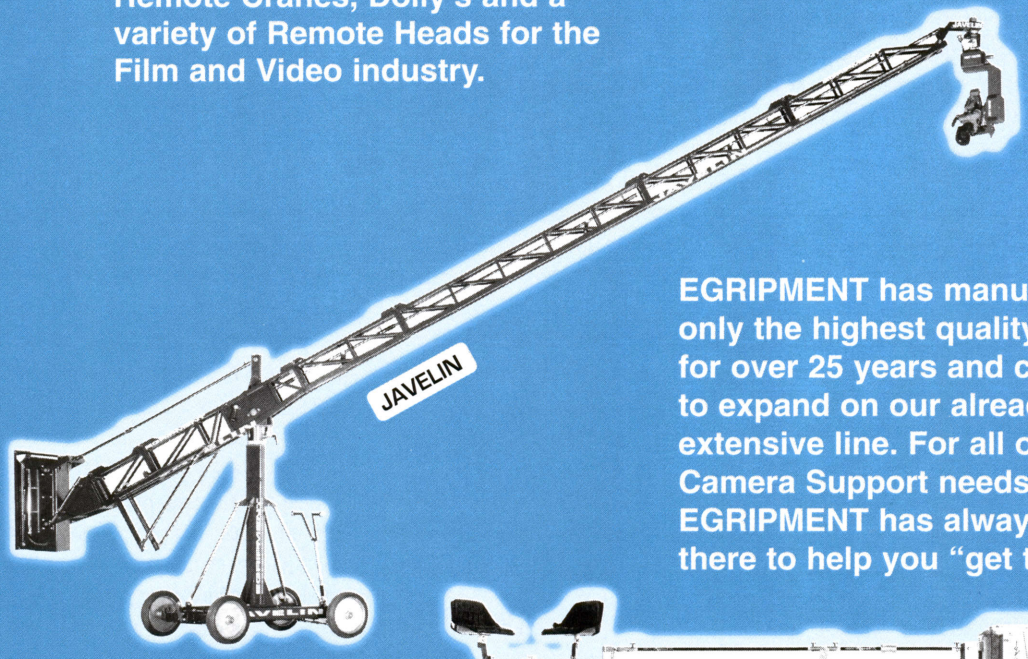
After moving on to San Francisco, Corion approached the San Francisco State University film program, explaining her need for "some good cinematographers who are young and energetic, love dance music, and can handle late nights." Those qualifications led her to Michael Hardwick, an SFSU grad who had served as a camera assistant on Tim Burton's animated *James and the Giant*

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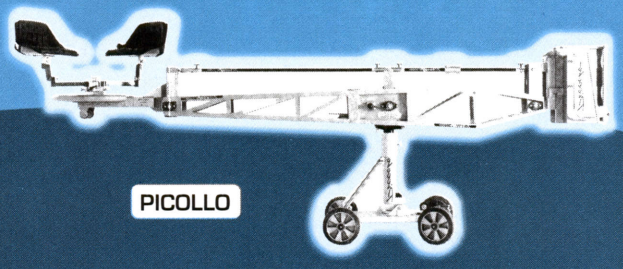
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Peach and shot the music video "Southbound Pachyderm" for the alternative rock band Primus. "We talked about shooting in the nightclubs with a vérité aesthetic," explains Hardwick. "We wanted to use the camera as a first-person narrator, allowing the audience to feel like part of the environment."

Like his colleagues, Hardwick found himself forced to capture club ambiance with available lighting, although he did attach a Xenon flashlight to the camera. Hardwick brought along Christopher Johnson, a fellow SFSU alumnus who engaged in some rather participatory filmmaking with his own Steadicam. Remembers Corion, "Outside the Sound Factory, Chris took off his shirt and strapped on the Steadicam; he looked as if he belonged in a sci-fi movie. Inside, he was up on the stage in everybody's face, moving all around. House music is about that kind of motion, and the excitement of keeping it all going, and Chris managed to generate some excitement himself."

To achieve consistent footage, the documentarians utilized the same equipment whenever possible. The New York and San Francisco club shoots were captured primarily on a 16mm Arriflex SR-2 with a 9.5mm Zeiss Superspeed lens wide open at T1.3. Kodak's 500 ASA 7298 stock, pushed one stop, proved ideal for these low-light situations. Meanwhile, most of the interviews were shot on 200 ASA black-and-white Double-X 7222.

So far, Corion has shot more than 10 hours of footage, with the eventual aim of a 70-90 minute running time. Although her demo is entirely black-and-white, Corion will utilize her color footage throughout the finished film. The director envisions the completed project as a four-part picture, with each segment offering a distinct visual style. Monochrome footage will be used for sequences shadowing a New York club kid, a Toronto DJ, and a Chicago-based indie record label owner. "Black-and-white really projects what this underground subculture is like — it's dark and grainy, almost mysterious," says Corion. However, the film's fourth segment, focusing on a London rave promoter, will be rendered solely in color "to show what the music is progressing to: the rave-techno-computer dance music culture, which is 'lights everywhere.'"

After raising funds to complete *Our House*, Corion plans to shoot a simulated club scene that will allow more visual control; this scenario will involve dancers whom she hopes can spawn the same spontaneous energy as the couple grooving at the Underground Network. "Some of that original footage will be nice to cut to, but in an artificial environment I can zoom in on the dancers, frame their entire bodies and capture every bead of sweat pouring off their faces," she explains.

Still, the director does not plan to change the loose, handheld feel of the interviews, setups she describes as "very 'on-the-fly' — we just slapped a couple of lights together on either side of the camera." Corion always allows her cinematographers to go with the moment. In one scene, a shot begins so tight on DJ Danny Tenaglia that the crew's reflection can be seen in his sunglasses before the operator zooms out to a medium shot; in another, the camera tilts down to Jimmy Sommerville's feet as he demonstrates how cowboys dance in Houston. "I don't want a 'talking heads' documentary," maintains Corion, who is now entering her seventh year of production on *Our House*. "I want the film to appeal to everyone, but mainly to a younger generation that's used to seeing music videos where everything is constantly moving — you've got to keep their attention!"

Positive Vibes Productions, (416) 690-4053; e-mail: joy.posvibe@myna.com.

The Worm Turns
by Thomas Kaufman

In producing five two-hour documentary programs entitled *A Science Odyssey,* the Boston public television station WGBH hired Larry Klein as writer/producer/director for the medicine-themed installment *Matters of Life & Death,* which will be broadcast nationwide on January 11. Larry hired me to join him in Ghana to document the country's health conditions; along with sound recordist Paul Rusnak and assistant cameraman Tom Inskeep, we flew from Washington, D.C. to Accra, Ghana's capital city. Our ultimate destination was Tamale (pronounced TAM-ah-lay), located about 400 miles to the north, near the Burkina Faso border.

The trip took about 14 hours on impossibly bad roads that looked as if they had been used for mortar practice; thousands of craters dotted through the landscape, making a simple trip painfully long. The next morning, we got off to a late start because Larry had to visit the local magistrates prior to our filming. He wasn't sure if there would be anything to shoot, but he asked us to be ready for the possible filming of guinea worm extractions.

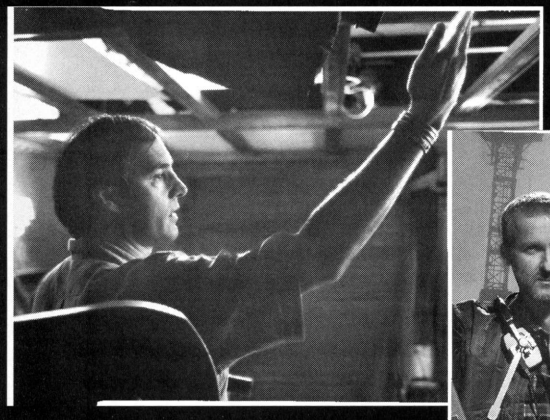
Apparently, the guinea worm goes back to ancient times. In fact, some scholars believe that the two serpents entwining the staff of the *caduceus* — the symbol for medicine — are actually guinea worms. These parasites enter the human body when a person drinks contaminated water. The worm larvae ride on flea beetles and then go their own way after being swallowed. Remaining in the body, they grow from two to three feet long over a period of months. When ready to release their eggs, the worm secretes an irritating fluid that causes pain and itching. The human host's only source of relief is to immerse the itching limb in water. The guinea worm detects the change in temperature and breaks through the skin to eject its eggs into the water supply, which restarts the cycle. The worm then slowly works it way out of the body; complete extrication sometimes takes weeks or months.

The goal of Global 2000, the state-sponsored health agency with whom we worked, is the total eradication of guinea worm. The organization has approached this problem with a three-pronged strategy: extraction of existing worms; education on how the worm lives and grows; and promotion of water filtration. The 3M Company has donated $14 million to produce fabric that filters water poured through it,

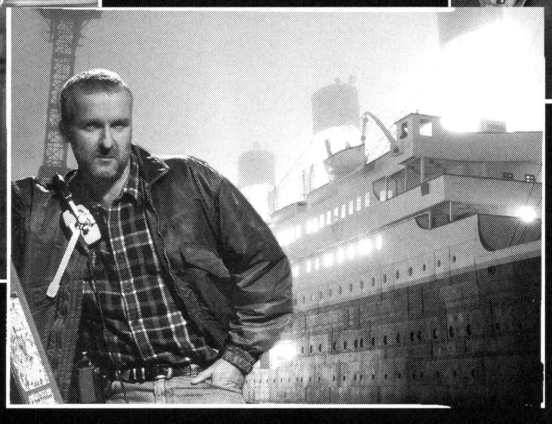
ON FILM



Rob Legato & team



Russ Carpenter



James Cameron

R.L. "*Titanic* has some 500 effects shots of every type and scale. We did things that were impossible a year ago, but it's not about technology. The computer is just an input device, like a piano keyboard. You can't play it unless you know the craft. Great music comes from the heart. It's the same with film. If you are faithful to the idea of recreating reality, digital effects can be a magical experience. Did the story move you? That's what matters. • When [Director] Jim Cameron showed me film of the real Titanic at the bottom of the ocean, I thought an opportunity like this might only happen once in a lifetime. Jim was immersed in the story. He spent more time on the deck of the Titanic than many of the real passengers did and knew every detail. There is an epoch quality that rings true. Other filmmakers understand how to use the new technology, but Jim has moved on to another plane. *Titanic* is a quantum leap forward." **Rob Legato, Visual Effects Supervisor, *Titanic*** • **R.C.** "*Titanic* is a love story on an epic scale with spectacular effects. For decades, we filmmakers have been using whatever enchantments we had at hand to either reveal the human heart or take audiences into rooms filled with magic. The computer is yet another amazing tool...but just as powerful is the well lit close-up. In the end, what moves me the most is that singular image filled with poetry and light...capturing the twinkle in Kate Winslet's eyes and the radiance of her skin, or the electric energy of Leonardo DiCaprio." **Russ Carpenter, ASC, Cinematographer, *Titanic***)))

Kodak Vision color negative films, Eastman EXR color intermediate film, Eastman EXR color print film and Kodak digital film technology were all used in the making of *Titanic*.

KODAK 5279

Russ Carpenter's credits include *Money Talks, Ghosts, The Indian in the Cupboard, True Lies* and *The Lawnmower Man*. His work in progress is *The Negotiator*.

Rob Legato's credits as a visual effects supervisor also include *Interview With The Vampire, Apollo 13, Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine.*

The visual effects team at Digital Domain included (from left to right), Erik Nash, Price Pethel, Rob Legato and Cari Thomas.

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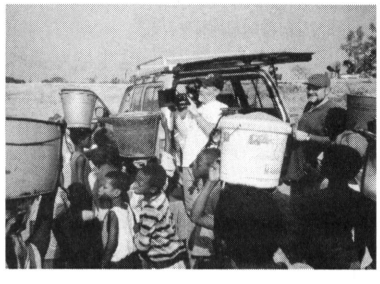
removing not only the worm larvae, but also *schistosomiasis,* another nasty parasite that can cause "river blindness," kidney failure, and death. Our group traveled with A.B., one of Global 2000's local liaisons in Tamale, and Don Hopkins, an



American doctor from the Centers for Disease Control, to a local health clinic sponsored by Global 2000.

We shot our footage with an Aaton-XTR Plus on Kodak 7293; with an 85 filter, I had an ASA of about 120. Larry initially wanted to shoot on 7245, a 50 ASA daylight-balanced stock. His reasoning was that since nearly everything we shot would be in daylight, 7245 and 7297 (a high-speed ASA 250 daylight-balanced stock), would be best for low-light events. The 7245 is the finest-grain stock made by Kodak, but ASA of 50 can be limiting in documentary shooting: if your subjects are not in direct sunlight, you may not have the latitude needed to film in shaded areas. My recommendation was to take only five rolls of 7245 for interviews, and to do the majority of our daylight filming on 7293, an EXR stock which has less grain than 7297, despite its slower ASA. (After we came back to the U.S., Kodak introduced Vision 7246, a fine-grained 250 ASA daylight stock which I certainly would have used instead of 7293 had it been available.)

Having been to equatorial countries before, I knew that no one in their right mind would be out in direct sunlight between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.; in any case, people tend to prefer working in the shade. Our first location was a building with only windows for illumination, so I felt that I had guessed correctly about the choice of emulsion. The stock not only captured the faces of the women in the scene, but also the colors and textures of their clothing. Next, we went into an examination room where nurses were listening to fetal heartbeats with the aid of a small ear-trumpet held to the mothers' abdomens. The exam rooms themselves were quite dark, lit only by a single window seven feet away. Luckily, I had brought a set of Zeiss Superspeed primes. I used a 12mm at T1.3 to film three women being checked by a nurse. The swelling of the women's ankles and the heartbeats and positions of their fetuses were all checked pretty rapidly, so I had to hustle to get the shots I needed. We then proceeded to film guinea worm extractions.



An extraction can take 20 to 40 minutes, but since the television program itself would last only 48 minutes, we had to find a way to fragment the procedure into significant sections. I could always make an educated guess on such matters, but I generally find that it's good preparation to see an event in its entirety before shooting. When I walked into that part of the clinic, a young man was calmly reclining while a doctor used a razor blade to make an incision and a tweezers to pull out the end of a worm. The doctor then began to wind the worm up on a stick, coiling it like a tiny flat white tape measure while massaging the patient's skin to help loosen the worm's purchase. On the next bed was a small boy, cradled by his mother and crying as the doctor made the incisions. Although I had no camera on my shoulder, I felt I was making this doctor nervous; he seemed to be a little shaky, and had to make a second and third incision. The boy cried harder, so I decided to give everyone a break and leave the room.

We did some shots of the waiting room, and went into the small courtyard to talk about what to film after the extractions. We ended up shooting Don Hopkins examining some of the guinea worm victims; I then went back inside to get footage of the two patients I had previously observed. This shooting was particularly difficult, since a small window provided the room's only illumination; I was using a Canon 8-64mm zoom wide open at T2.4, which made the depth of field quite narrow. Now that film and sound were rolling, the young man was more stoic than before; he affected a relaxed air while his doctor finished the extraction. The worm, which resembled a flat piece of string, was dropped into a small bowl with several others. Still rolling, I panned over to the second table, where the boy had quieted down and the doctor was finishing up. I shot close-ups of the doctor's face and of the extraction itself. Then I figured I could get a reverse shot of the mother's and child's faces. By the time I began filming the boy, he was bawling again, but this time with a terrified cry. The mother asked him what was wrong; I didn't understand her words, but could hear the calming quality in her tone and inflection. The boy then sputtered a response which made his mother laugh. She politely told me that her son thought I was about to shoot him; he believed the Aaton on my shoulder to be a gun.

The last thing we filmed that first day was an interview with a group of people who responded to Larry's questions about their health care and well-being. Larry wanted the group to shed their customary politeness and show their anger on camera. He told A.B. to let them know they had an opportunity to speak directly with the powers-that-be, who could improve the quality of their lives if only they would speak out a little.

That was all the prodding this group needed. An elderly man with an incredible map of wrinkles across his face led off with a general complaint about the lack of care; a young man in a green polo shirt took up the refrain, and made it clear that he thought the Northerners were being neglected by the mighty government center in the South.

Two vistas of cameraman Thomas Kaufman as he chronicles the townspeople of Tamale, Ghana collecting water.



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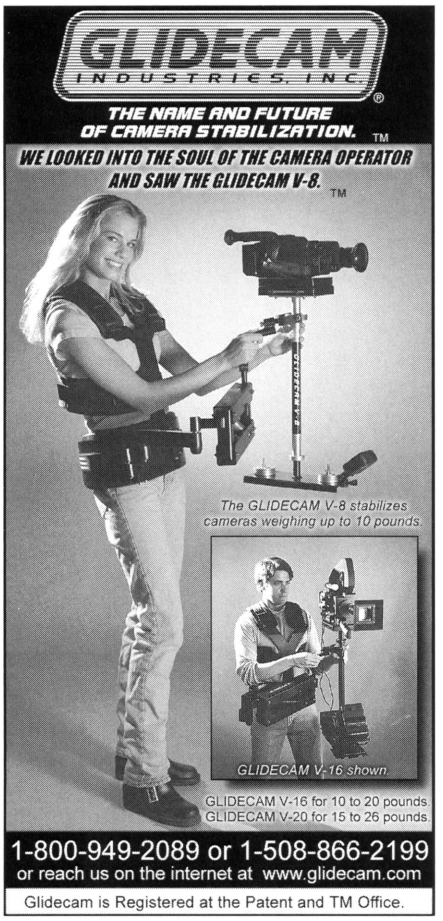
Dynamic Light Control.

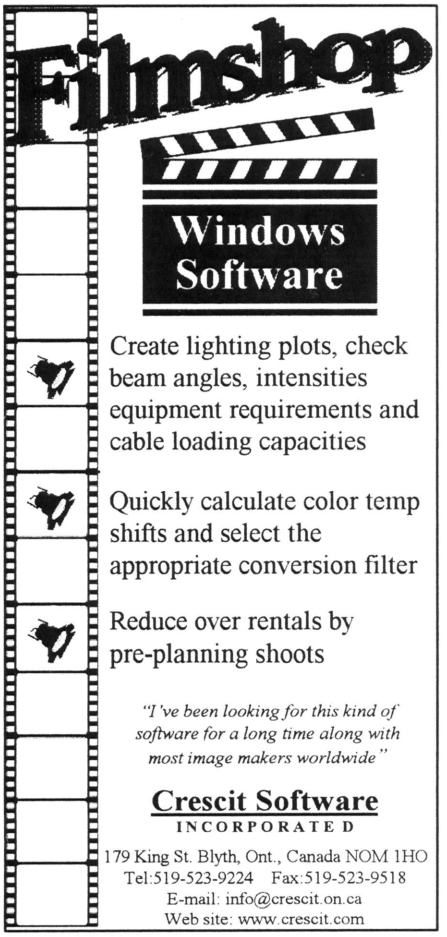
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A woman behind him shouted out in agreement, and another woman told a story about a family member's illness. Soon everyone was talking at once. It was just what Larry wanted, and I couldn't have enjoyed it more if it the outcry had been in English.

Reminiscing About *Jazz on a Summer's Day*
by Brooke Comer

When Bert Stern aimed a motion picture camera at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, the renowned still photographer was unfamiliar with both jazz and filmmaking. At the time, Stern had already shot the Egyptian pyramids for a Smirnoff vodka campaign, and his fashion photography graced the covers of many major magazines; today, he's best known for capturing Marilyn Monroe's last photo session, which was printed in *Vogue*. Stern's initial filmmaking foray resulted in *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, which chronicles virtuoso performances by such musical greats as Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, Sonny Stitt, Thelonious Monk, and Dinah Washington. Recently, a new print of this 39-year-old film was struck from the original negative; after several successful screenings at New York's Lincoln Center, this pristine copy is now available for home viewing, courtesy of New Yorker Video.

Stern's interest in shooting the Newport Jazz Festival arose from a chance meeting with the event's founder, Elaine Lorillard. The photographer was also intrigued by the contradictory images which the terms "Newport" and "jazz" conjured up in his mind. "I was thinking black and white, rich and poor, urban cities versus the green lawns of the big estates," he says. "Of course, I envisioned it all wrong."

Upon arriving in Newport for a location scout, a disappointed Stern discovered the festival's venue to be a cement schoolyard downtown, a site far from the area's exclusive homes. "I'd imagined these beautiful green lawns in the background, but the real backdrop was not visual at all, so I decided not to do it," he recalls. Stern changed his mind, however at the urging of a total stranger — his seatmate on the flight back to New York. "I told him I wasn't going to make the movie, and he replied, 'But you must!' I realized that he was right, and that I'd find a way to do it; I did, and it changed my life."

With the project in full swing once again, Stern personally selected additional camerapeople, including Courtney Hafela and Ray Phelan, so that two to five cameras would be rolling for any given song. He then adapted an 180mm still lens to fit an Arriflex "because at that time, there were no 180mm lenses for movie cameras." With his long lens, he could cut to people's reactions and capture such priceless moments as a girl enjoying a scoop of ice cream poised to plop off its cone. "I had that still photographer's intuition that something was about to happen," he says.

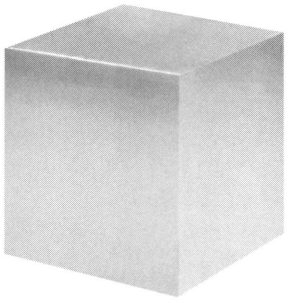
After he received festival director George Wein's permission to light the stage, Stern requested that all fixtures be turned toward his camera: on fashion shoots, he'd become accustomed to pointing his camera directly into the lights. "This ended up giving the film a distinctive look," he notes. "We also tried to position ourselves so that people's heads could move in and out of the light, either blocking it or creating flares in ways that were visually exciting." Alan Greene of the now-defunct New York rental company CECO helped devise a visual sync slate so that each camera could be synched up to a light. "It was complicated, and it took [editor] Aram Avakian about six months to sync up all the footage, but it worked."

Stern had been asked not to shoot Mahalia Jackson as she crooned "The Lord's Prayer," because the camera's noise might overpower the song's soft notes. "I took a chance and shot anyway," he says, "and I'm glad I did because it was about midnight, and [the song] made a wonderful ending for the movie — it had a strong spiritual feeling."

Not every performer gave such a visual performance, but Stern found he could mix in other interesting scenes:

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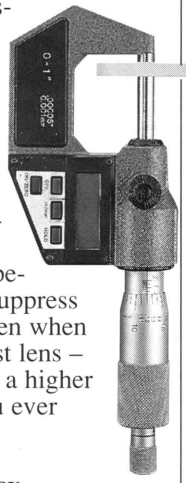
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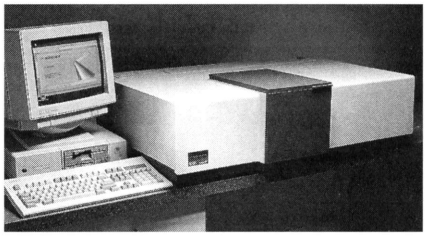
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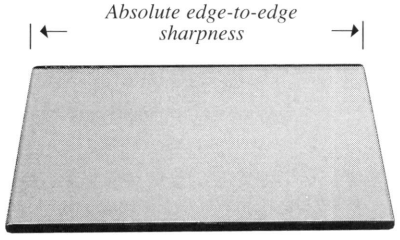


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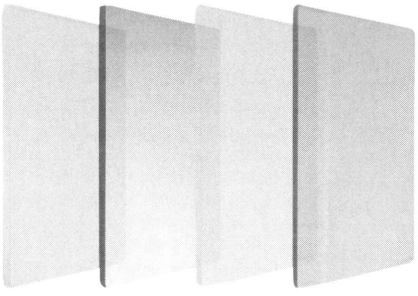
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Jimmy Gunfire's show, for example, inspired some abstract visual imagery. "His clothes were beige, and I saw seagulls in my mind. I thought I could set some seagulls against his music, so I went out to the dock at dawn to look for some." He didn't locate any gulls, but he did find beautiful reflections of anchored America's Cup yachts; he shot the boats instead, for use in the end titles.

On the sound front, Stern forged a relationship with Columbia Records by suggesting that the company record the entire festival in stereo, then offer tracks to the other music companies whose artists performed at the show. "Otherwise," he says, "every record company would have come running up onstage to set up mikes when their artist was on, and that would have been a mess." George Avakian, then-head of Columbia Records (whose prized artist Louis Armstrong was one of the festival's biggest stars) was given a credit as musical director after he granted Stern's request to plug into Columbia's stereo system with a recording device that would carry a sync signal to the camera. Avakian also offered Stern the services of a film editor — his brother Aram.

Jazz on a Summer's Day almost hit a snag when Stern approached agent Joe Glazer for permission to shoot his client, Louis Armstrong. "At first, Joe said, 'Go ahead and shoot and we'll talk about money later.' When he saw the footage, which he said was the best he'd ever seen, he named a price: $25,000." The other jazz artists had received less than $1,000; Stern paid most of the Armstrong bill out of his own pocket, but got some help from Milton Gordon of the distribution house Galaxy (which, incidentally, owned all of the *Lassie* films). Gordon liked the project and provided the rest of the investment needed to include the Armstrong footage.

The recently revamped print of *Jazz on A Summer's Day* resulted from Japanese interest in the film; one of Stern's assistants brought the picture to Japan, where some screenings earned it a small but strong fan base. At first, Stern wasn't too keen on striking a new print from the original negative. He decided otherwise after being introduced to DuArt's David Pultz, a 19-year industry veteran whose resumé includes the timing of Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (see *AC* Jan. '95), a film shot on five different short-end stocks.





Famed trumpeter Louis Armstrong hits the high notes in unrestored (top) and revamped frames from *Jazz on a Summer's Day*.

By comparison, working on Stern's documentary was far less tedious. Says Pultz, "With the initial print original negative, I went ahead and made corrections from the timing already there. But the negative was so old, the dyes had changed in the film, and I had to readjust the timing." The fading had shifted all the red/green/blue dye layers; most severely affected was the blue layer, which was infused with a yellowish tinge. Pultz used the timing numbers themselves to remove the yellow: he worked with the initial yellowish print over a lightbox connected to a framecount computer cueing system, and gave each shot in the film its own timing light. Then he passed over each individual shot, using Kodak correction filters to look at each print. Pultz examined each shot with his loop to determine the type of correction required. Removing the yellow tinge took Pultz an entire day as he passed over nine 10-minute reels shot-by-shot. The timer praises the improvements Kodak has made in its release stock: "The newest one we use is 5386, which utilizes the T-grain technology — a fine-grain technology which looks less grainy and is a tremendous aid to the look of the print."

According to an awestruck Stern, the retimed, restruck *Jazz on A Summer's Day* "is absolutely incredible. I was very taken with it, because it had been so long since I'd seen the film. Back when I began the project, I was so worried that I wouldn't have those gorgeous green lawns and big estates in the picture — but in the end, I didn't really need them."

1997 IDA Awards

The International Documentary Association (IDA) held its 13th annual awards ceremony on October 31 at Pasadena's Ritz-Carlton Huntington Hotel. The honored works were chosen from a pool of more than 400 entries. Winning in the feature category were *Donka: The X-Ray of an African Hospital,* Thierry Michel's look at Conakry Guinea's insufficient medical facilities, and William Gazecki's *Waco: The Rules of Engagement,* an examination of the infamous Branch Davidian incident. Feted in the limited series category (which awards a single episode of up to a 12-part series) was Blaine Baggett's panoramic epic *The Great War and the Shaping of 20th Century.* Lauded as a single program in a "strand" series was *Love Story,* Catrine Clay's World War II-era piece on German-Jewish female love affair, which aired as part of the BBC's *Timewatch* series. The ABC News Video Source Award was given to *Big Jim Folsom: The Two Faces of Populism,* Robert Clem's portrait of the progressive Alabama governor. In the shorts division, the IDA celebrated *The Burning Barrel,* Christina Craton and Tim Schwab's reflection on consumer waste.

Michael Smith, a Brooklyn-based alumnus of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, received the David L. Wolper Student Achievement Award (a $1,000 Wolper honorarium and $1,000 Kodak product grant) for the poignant memorial *Jesse's Gone.* Smith dedicated the honor to his former teacher and mentor: the late documentarian Marlon Riggs (*Ethnic Notions, Tongues Untied, Color Adjustment*). Stanford University's Mark



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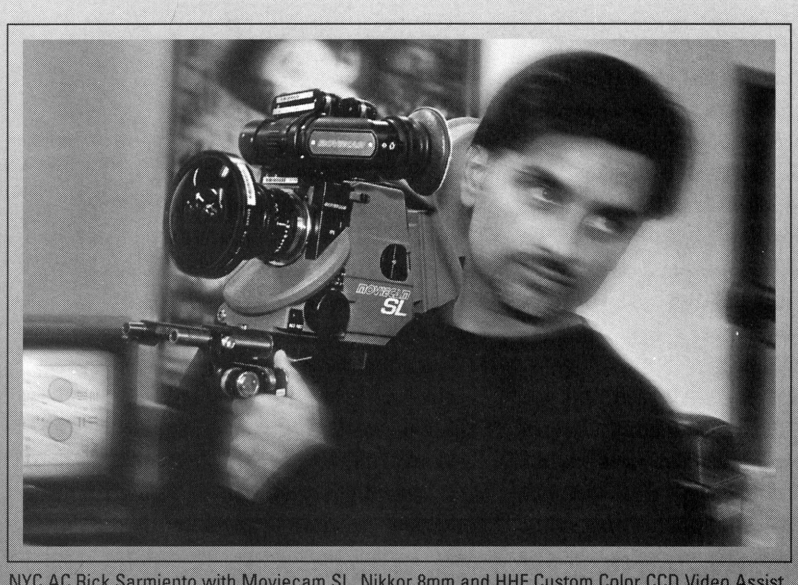
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Becker earned a special Jury Award for Excellence for *Jules at Eight.*

The Pare Lorentz Award — named after the respected filmmaker of *Nuremberg* and *The River* — was presented by Pare Lorentz Jr. to Angus Gibson and Jo Menell for their biographical piece *Mandela: Son of Africa Father of A Nation* (see Production Slate, *AC* April '97).

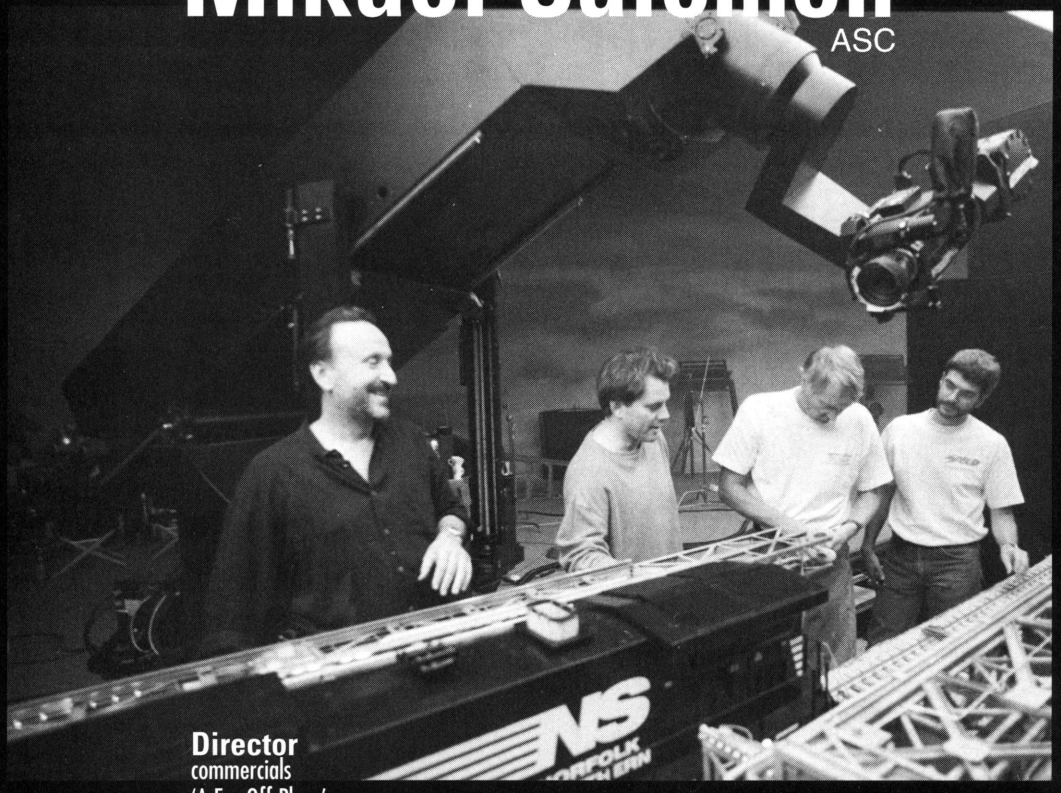
Lithuanian filmmaker Jonas Mekas (*Grand Street, The Brig*) earned the Preservation and Scholarship Award for a lifetime's worth of efforts, which have included founding both the underground distribution collective Filmmakers Cooperative and the Anthology Film Archives. The latter organization, said Mekas, preserves and screens "neglected postwar masterpieces, and encourages reflection on the future of film."

The IDA presented its Career Achievement Award to documentarian Henry Hampton, president and founder of Boston-based Blackside, Inc. The filmmaker is best known for his insightful, thought-provoking films about American history, including *Eyes on the Prize, The Great Depression, Malcolm X: Make It Plain* and *America's War on Poverty.* Hampton commented," If I have a dream for this material, it is the generational impact. People have attempted to talk to younger generations about civil rights, but without film, the powerful history of this key turning point would be impossible for them to understand." Past honorees of this prize include Ted Turner, Bill Moyers, Walter Cronkite, Marcel Ophuls, Albert Maysles and John Hendricks.

The IDA's Board of Directors bestowed its esteemed Amicus Award — specifically earmarked for "a friend of the documentary" — to director Steven Spielberg for his devotion to the documentation and preservation of Holocaust survivor testimonies through the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. (The only other individual who has received this honor is Discovery Channel founder/chairman/CEO John S. Hendricks.) The nonprofit Shoah Foundation, founded and chaired by Spielberg, is dedicated to videotaping and preserving interviews of worldwide

Mikael Salomon

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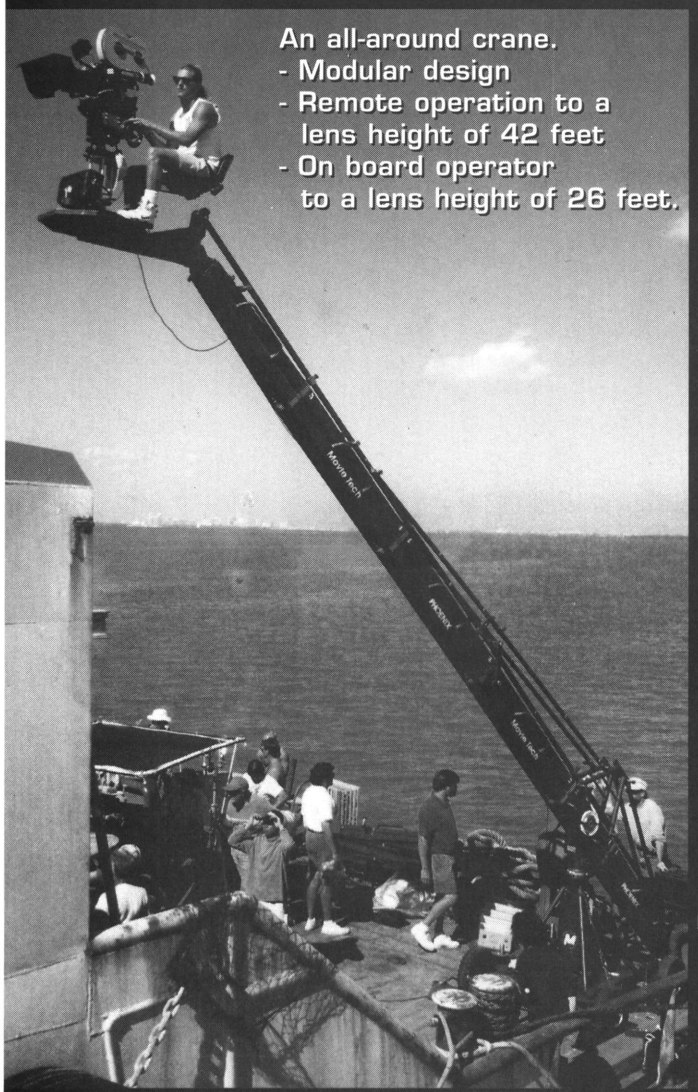
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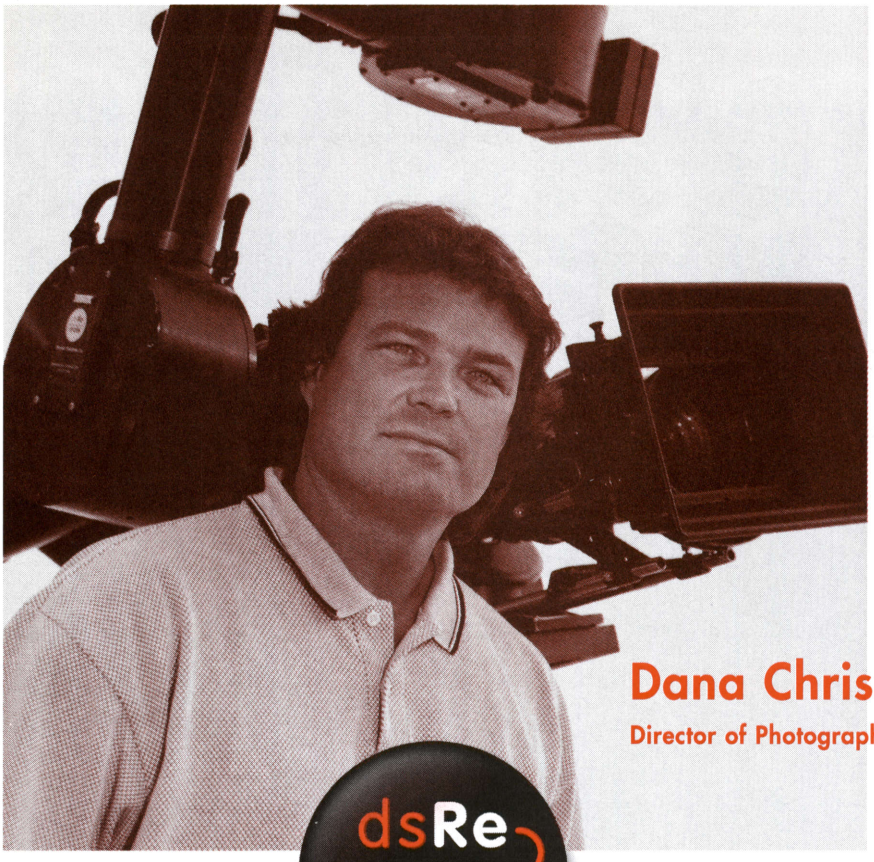
IDA, (310) 284-8422, fax (310) 785-9334.

Preservation School Named After Selznick

The George Eastman House, based in Rochester, New York, recently announced that its School of Film Preservation has been named in honor of the late L. Jeffrey Selznick, a pioneer in film preservation, son of movie producer David O. Selznick and grandson of Louis B. Meyer. Selznick, who was involved in the film industry in a number of capacities, heavily championed the cause of motion picture preservation; he worked to reintroduce the Technicolor dye-transfer process his father helped make famous with such films as *A Star is Born* (1937) and *Gone With the Wind* (1939). He also served as the head of the Louis B. Mayer Foundation and was instrumental in the creation of the George Eastman School of Film Preservation. This school began instruction in September 1996 and is the first institution of its kind in the United States: offering classes in professional handling, repair, preservation, and restoration of archival motion picture materials. Notes Paolo Cherchi Usai, the school's director and senior curator of motion picture collections, "As a first-hand witness to the damage done to the work of his father and grandfather through neglect, Mr. Selznick knew all too well the importance of preserving motion pictures for future generations. The unanimous decision to name the preservation school in Mr. Selznick's honor was made shortly after he passed away this past May. The L. Jeffery Selznick School of Film Preservation is now accepting applications for the 1998-99 school year; interested candidates should contact the Eastman House motion picture department at (716) 271-3361, ext. 333. ■

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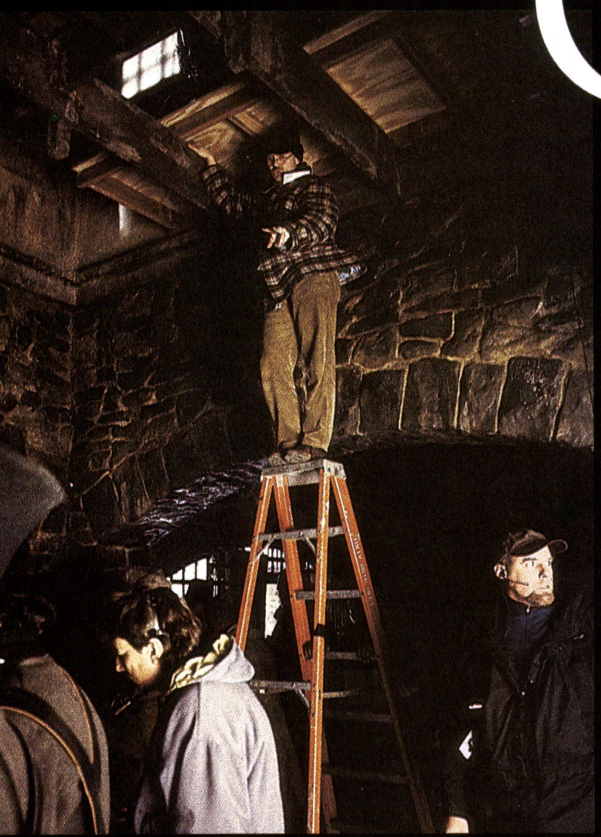
"We chose the new dsRemote 3-axis dsRemote for a shoot with very demanding conditions. It was a spot for Cadillac Catera and we shot three days high up in the Rockies above Aspen, Colorado. The camera was underslung only inches above the road off an extension bolted to a crane arm on a camera car out of Denver. With this setup we were flying down a less than perfect road at speeds of 40–45 mph, passing cars, panning in between them, booming up and over, sliding across fronts and rears, and in general working all the angles, corners and edges.

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Throughout this adventure, the dsRemote's feel and responsiveness was excellent. Prior experience with 2 and 3-axis remote heads has taught me to be very concerned with rigidity and dynamic/harmonic vibrations which affect the smoothness of the shot. This head's performance was absolutely solid and yielded one smooth shot after another. Congratulations to Weaver/Steadman!"

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Breaking Slavery's Chains



Steven Spielberg and Janusz Kaminski, ASC make ingenious use of traditional filmmaking techniques to retell the legend of an infamous slaveship rebellion in *Amistad.*

by Stephen Pizzello

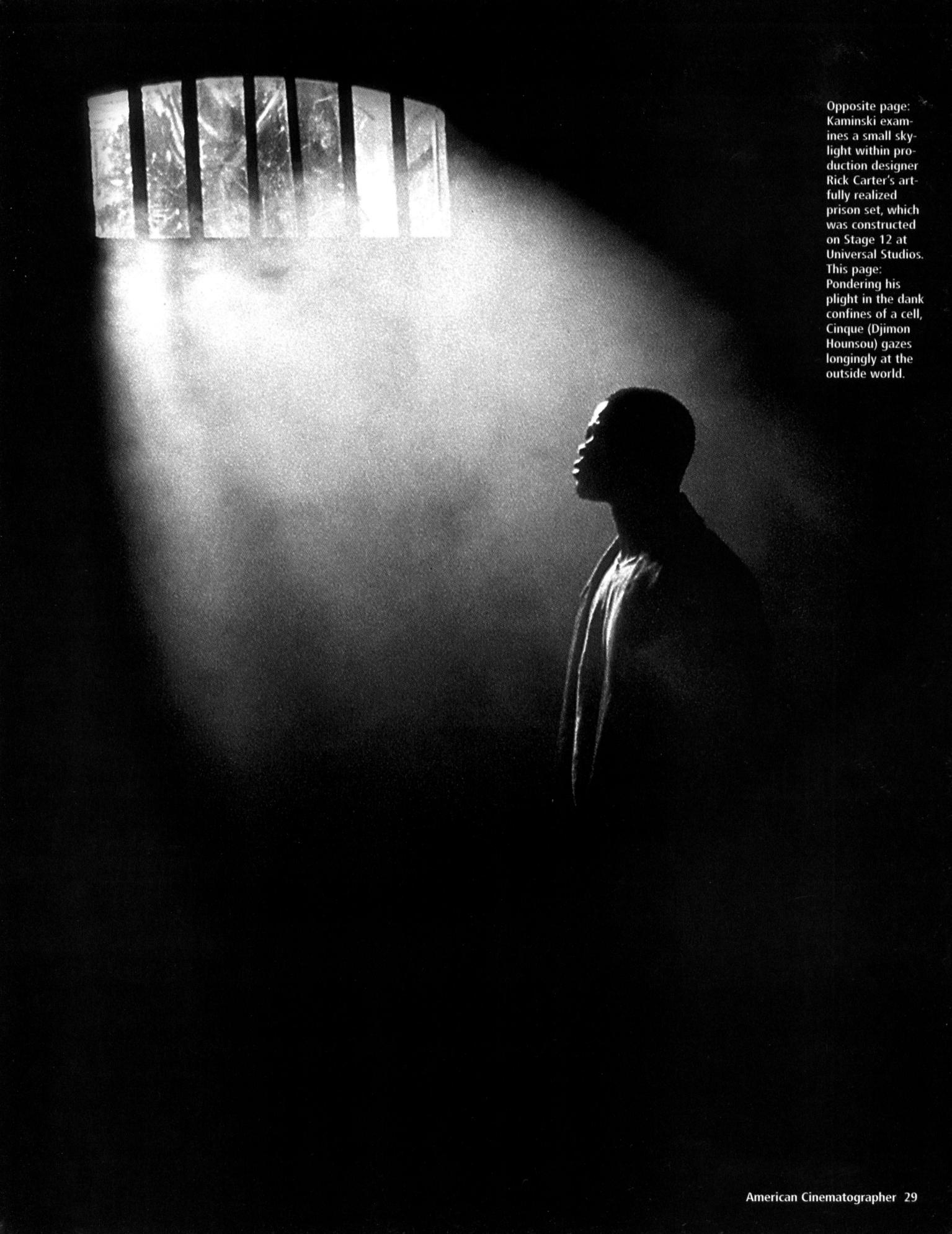
Photography by Andrew Cooper

In the dank cargo hold of a 19th-century slave ship, flashes of lightning illuminate an African prisoner's bloodied fingers as they dig at an iron nail embedded in the floorboards. This nail, fastened to a heavy chain, is all that prevents him — and his slumbering companions — from a chance at escape. His eyes riveted on the task, the prisoner sweats heavily as he scrapes at the wood surrounding the nail, struggling for purchase. Suddenly, as a thunderclap rips across the stormy night sky, the nail is wrenched loose.

These dramatic images constitute the opening salvo of Steven Spielberg's powerful new motion picture, *Amistad.* Until now, the true story behind this $40 million film has languished, all but forgotten, within the dusty pages of obscure U.S. history books. Early in 1839, approximately 500 Africans were kidnapped from their homeland and thrust into a nightmare. Sold into slavery by fellow Africans collaborating with corrupt Spanish and Portuguese traders, these unfortunate souls were herded onto the *Tecora,* a ship bound for Cuba. Crammed together in the vessel's gloomy hold, the prisoners endured subhuman living conditions and barbarous treatment at the hands of their ruthless captors. When the *Tecora* finally docked in Havana, 53 of the Africans — 49 young men, one boy and three girls — were bought by a pair of Spaniards, Jose Ruiz and Pedro Montes. The partners transferred them to the equally claustrophobic hold of a schooner with the grotesquely ironic moniker *La Amistad* ("amistad" is the Spanish word for "friendship"). The ship soon embarked on what was expected to be a routine, three-day voyage to the opposite end of Cuba.

The prisoners had other plans, however. On the night of July 1, the man they had elected to be their leader, a 25-year-old rice farmer named Cinque, used a nail to pick the locks on the iron collars fastened around his companions' necks. Freed from their shackles, the enraged Africans launched a bloody revolt and took control of the ship. They attempted to force Ruiz and Montes to navigate back to Africa, but the Spaniards surreptitiously steered the vessel northwest to the United States, where it was inter-

Photos courtesy of Dreamworks SKG



Opposite page: Kaminski examines a small skylight within production designer Rick Carter's artfully realized prison set, which was constructed on Stage 12 at Universal Studios. This page: Pondering his plight in the dank confines of a cell, Cinque (Djimon Hounsou) gazes longingly at the outside world.

Breaking Slavery's Chains

cepted by a Navy ship. The mutineers were quickly imprisoned, and soon found themselves facing a series of landmark court trials that would decide their fate and ultimately alter the course of American history.

Spielberg's rendition of these events is supported by an impressive cast. Newcomer Djimon Hounsou, a native of West Africa, makes a striking debut as the strong-willed Cinque. Morgan Freeman portrays abolitionist Theodore Joadson who, along with fellow abolitionist Lewis Tappan (Stellan Skarsgård), is among the first to come to the Africans' aid. This duo enlists the assistance of a scrappy attorney named Roger Baldwin (Matthew McConaughey), whose personal involvement with the case gradually allows him see the *Amistad* survivors as people rather than property. The Africans' champions find themselves facing tough opposition, however, when the president himself, Martin Van Buren (Nigel Hawthorne), intervenes. Sensing that they are outgunned, Baldwin and his cohorts seek the help of a powerful ally: former president John Quincy Adams (Anthony Hopkins), who eventually agrees to argue the Africans' case before the Supreme Court.





Above: On location at a courthouse in New England, the cinematographer is bathed in hot beams of "sunlight" created by powerful 18K fixtures mounted on Condors outside the windows. The crew also used crane-mounted 12′ x 12′ Griffolyns (lower right) to block out the real sun when necessary. Below: Morgan Freeman as abolitionist Theodore Joadson.

Spielberg has conceded that he had no knowledge of the *Amistad* case until it was brought to his attention by producer Debbie Allen. In 1984, Allen had come across two volumes of essays and articles, titled *Amistad I* and *II,* penned by African-American writers, historians and philosophers. She was so taken with the material that she immediately optioned the rights to *Black Mutiny,* a historical account of the incident written by William Owen. Allen researched and developed the project for more than a decade, but found few supporters in Hollywood; after seeing *Schindler's List,* she brought the project to Spielberg, who jumped at the chance to direct.

No rest for the weary

At the time, however, Spielberg was working on *The Lost World* (see *AC* June 1996), and had plans to tackle another ambitious film, *Saving Private Ryan,* in Europe several months after completing his dinosaur epic. Nevertheless, he decided to shoot *Amistad* between these two pictures — on the fly and, hopefully, with the same crew. Director of photography Janusz Kaminski, ASC, who had earned an Academy Award for his photography on *Schindler's List* (see *AC* Jan. '94), accommodated Spielberg's sudden obsession by canceling his plans for a much-needed vacation. "While we were working on *The Lost World,* I thought that my next project would be *Saving Private Ryan,*" Kaminski says. "I had gone into *The Lost World* directly from *Jerry Maguire,* and I was anticipating a bit of a break. But two or three weeks before we wrapped *Lost World,* Steven came to me and said he was going to do *Amistad,* which would start five weeks later. That is, it would start five weeks later for *Steven* — for me, it was going to start immediately, because I had to do prep. I really wanted to do *Amistad,* but I was questioning my physical ability to perform properly, because I hadn't been planning on doing it. I knew that *Private Ryan* [which is set during World War II] was going to be a really big job requiring a tremendous amount of historical research. But somehow I talked myself into it, and the crew got really excited about the material. The story was so great that my body didn't demand any rest."

Kaminski says that his close reading of David Franzoni's script sparked some clear visual strategies. "I immediately knew that the story required photography that was not too pretty," he says. "I didn't want the movie to fall into the clichés of the historical genre. It was an 1830s period movie, which automatically





brings to mind a certain kind of romantic lighting. Period movies really allow a cinematographer to blossom, because they allow you to do such sumptuous photography. I knew that I was going to be dealing with beautiful faces, fantastic costumes by Ruth Carter, and great production design by Rick Carter.

"Believe me, it was very tempting to go in the usual direction, with really rich photography and gorgeous lighting. It's particularly hard to resist that when there are all of these beautiful movies coming out; I found myself saying, 'Why am I lighting so simply?' But then the gaffer, David Devlin, would tell me, 'Hey man, don't worry, there will be a couple of scenes where we'll really get the chance to show off.' And there were. For example, there are a couple of sequences involving the adolescent Queen of Spain [played by *The Piano*'s Anna Paquin] where we created the typical warm, golden tones with sunlight bouncing off the table and rich, velvety costumes.

"But in general, the movie is about a slave rebellion in 1830, so it would have been wrong to apply lighting that conveyed romantic notions. It's a very harsh and emotional story: these people were kidnapped; packed like cattle into a slave ship, where they spent many days before being intercepted by a Navy ship; and then sent off to a really dungeon-like prison. They were suffering from cold and starvation. I felt that the lighting should support that storyline."

Rapid deployment

Because Spielberg envisioned a very fast shoot (approximately 48 days, in the final tally), Kaminski and his crew knew that a thorough prep period was essential. Gaffer Devlin notes, "The schedule was very short, and while the script had started out at 120 pages, it eventually ballooned to about 150 or 160 [which is not an atypical occurrence on a Spielberg film]. Right before we started, we were all wondering how the hell we were going to get this film done. We were scheduled to shoot on a huge prison set at Universal, then at many different locations in New England during the winter, and finally on the ocean off the coast of San Pedro. Steven didn't even want to think about the water work after his experiences on *Jaws*, which are well-documented. He'd tell stories about how he'd shot for 40 days just to get a single scene on that movie — and here we were shooting a *whole movie* in 48!

"Fortunately, Janusz made it clear from the start that he wanted two weeks with a full crew to do tests. As a result, we had good notes going into scenes. Steven and Janusz work very quickly and instinctually, and quite often that approach means that we might have to do something on the spot, without planning ahead. But being able to do tests in prep allowed us to work out a series of lighting schemes that we could reference. I had this little laminated card with about 10 different lighting situations on it that we'd liked in the tests. It was almost like being on a football team and calling the plays."

One of the team's key "plays" was dubbed the "Seven-Minute Drill," so named because the crew members had refined its rapid deployment into an art form. "No matter how big the scene, that setup allowed us to get really beautiful soft light in seven minutes," Devlin says. "We used a muslin bounce, and in front of that we'd put a half Soft Frost diffusion frame; we would then aim Fay lights or other lighting units into the frame. The size of the frame simply varied with the size of the setup. That technique created a nice, soft, pleasing light, and the half Soft Frost kind of directionalized it and stopped it from spreading every-

Left: Former president John Quincy Adams (Anthony Hopkins) pleads the Africans' case before the Supreme Court. Kaminski sought to lend these scenes an elegant visual style that would stand in marked contrast to the film's earlier court sequences. Below: Scrappy attorney Roger Baldwin (Matthew McConaughey) provides the Africans with a ray of hope.



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where. It worked very well, especially because we were using the ENR process and sometimes had black nets behind the lens for filtration. It was okay if the light hit the backgrounds, because the sets were painted in dark colors. Rick Carter and Janusz worked together to achieve the desired texture in the walls, and they chose certain paint colors to reflect the period and visual style of the picture."



Above: Kidnapped and sold into slavery by fellow Africans, Cinque wonders if he will ever return to his home. Right: Spielberg coaches actor Razaaq Adoti under the attentive gaze of producer Debbie Allen.

Special processes and smoke

Kaminski explains that his decision to use Technicolor's ENR process, in combination with flashing, stemmed from his love of contrast. "When I'm doing a normal movie — without ENR — I typically try to add a bit more contrast, especially when I'm lighting faces," he says. "I want one side to be light, the other side to be darker, and so on. I always end up flagging the excess light to create some contrast because of the latitude of the film. While doing tests with ENR on *Amistad,* I learned very quickly that the process allows you to dispense with a lot of the grip equipment, because extra contrast is inherent to the ENR process. We could simply put a frontal light at a certain angle, without using flags."

Key grip Jim Kwiatkowski, who has worked with the cinematographer since 1993, confirms, "We did have to adjust for that a bit. I'd ask Janusz about [flagging] certain setups, and he'd say, 'Don't worry, the ENR will take care of it.' The ENR really absorbs light in some areas that you'd normally want to control."

Kaminski says that he carefully tested for various combinations of ENR, flashing, and smoke. "I'd find out what would happen if, for instance, I put a black net filter behind the lens, added smoke and ENR to the mix, and then lit flatly. We got to the point where we were trying to create the most simplistic and idiotic lighting possible, where you just put a bounce card in front of someone's face and aim a light into it. That's as flat as you can get! We were dealing with a lot of black faces, so we were getting a lot of contrast right there — the light is reflected from a black face, and it just falls off. But that didn't create any problems for us, even when we were putting someone as pale as Matthew McConaughey next to Djimon. Djimon's magical face is truly black, but he reflects light beautifully; that compensated for Matthew's skin tone. If I had them in a two-shot, I'd maybe put the light closer to Djimon. My hat is off to Kodak in that regard; these days, the emulsions are so sophisticated, and have so much latitude, that you don't have to do very much to accommodate the tonal differences. For all of these reasons, we started doing very simple lighting tests with very easy lighting; there were no tricks.

"This was the first movie on which I used ENR, and it was also the first where I flashed the film. On *The Lost World,* I did extensive tests with





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A stoic Hounsou provides a light reading for Kaminski, who found himself inspired by the actor's "magical" features.

Deluxe's CCE process. It's an incredible process, but it was a little bit too harsh for that particular movie. I felt that *Amistad* would be the right movie to use a process on. If you don't prepare, though, you can really get yourself into problems with the darkness and the contrast. ENR can almost be *so* high-contrast that there are no mid-range tones; if you're not careful, everything becomes either black or white. You therefore have to test, and you have to use a certain lighting style. You don't necessarily have to flash, but you do have to start filling out the shadows a bit. I flashed this film because I did comparison tests for certain things — with flashing and without it. I found that the ENR becomes very slick and elegant if you don't flash it. It's very beautiful, but if you flash 10 or 15 percent it becomes grittier, which was the look I wanted for the story. I learned a tremendous amount about ENR from the interview *American Cinematographer* did with Darius Khondji [AFC] on *Evita* [see *AC* Jan. '96]. That's a good example of a film in which great lighting is augmented by ENR for a beautiful final result. Darius' explanation of his ENR work was very helpful to me; he basically said, 'Flash it, test it and see if you like it.'"

Kaminski used a Panaflasher to pre-expose his stocks in varying percentages, ranging from 7 to 15 percent. "For a typical scene, I would flash the wide shot about 10 percent, but if I wanted a bit more drama or contrast I would flash maybe 7 percent. We used standard white light in the flashing. The Panaflasher is a very interesting device; I'd tested it on seven or eight other occasions, but I'd never liked it, simply because I love to have contrast. But this time, in conjunction with the ENR, I really liked it. We flashed the negative, which introduced some light into the shadows and added some grain, and then applied the ENR, which kind of counterbalances the flashing by adding more contrast and getting rid of the grain. However, ENR also affects your color saturation; the colors become softer, and the highlights become a bit metallic. That was the kind of look I wanted. I was losing a bit of the grittiness by adding ENR, but the flashing made up for it."

Assessing the results of Kaminski's visual recipe, Devlin offers, "The special processes really added something to the film, because all of a sudden the stocks didn't look so clean. I just did some commercials with stocks that have up to 9 or 10 stops of latitude, and as the emulsions go more in that clean direction, it becomes harder to give scenes a really emotional feeling. Nowadays you sometimes have to go through leaps and bounds with the lighting to make it interesting and give it a real signature. When you use special processes to alter the way the film records, you can create a look that doesn't look quite so stylized, because the lighting doesn't have to be so overt. If you have to use lighting techniques to keep things really dark and black, it becomes more obvious to the viewer. If you control the look on a several different levels — as Janusz did on this film with ENR, flashing and smoke — it's a bit more effective."

A French influence

ENR and flashing were not the only new wrinkles in Kaminski's approach to the film. An ardent admirer of fellow cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, AFC, Kaminski adopted several of his peer's favored techniques for *Amistad*. He recalls, "Before we began shooting, I watched *Queen Margot* and *Interview With the Vampire*. Rousselot uses China balls a lot, and he underexposes in his color palette. All of his colors are a bit pastel, and he gets a bit of grain in the movie. Everything falls very softly into the shadows, and the actors' faces have a painterly quality.

"While watching his movies, David Devlin and I kept asking ourselves, 'How is he doing it?' We finally figured out that there was always a rather large distance between the object that he was photographing and the background, and that he was often using flat light. We starting playing with that, using very flat, frontal lighting and moving the object that we were shooting away from the wall, so the shadows would fall away. We also underexposed by two stops. And sure enough, the magic started happening! It was like reaching another level."

Devlin elaborates, "We wanted to have a textural feeling in this film, and the way you'd normally achieve that is to use hard light. We were trying to do the same thing with soft

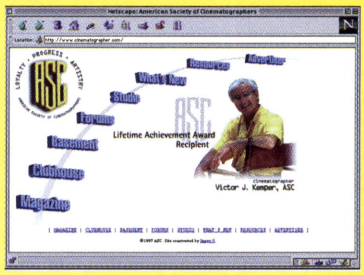
light, which led us to light frontally with smaller units. That gave us patches of light, but we still had contrast in the scenes. If you start using side angles and off angles, things become a bit less painterly, because you don't see the falloff of the light on things. We would often use smaller units at frontal angles so the light wouldn't break. When you allow the intensity of the light to fall off on objects, it really brings you in from the darkness."

In this regard, Kaminski considers his work on *Amistad* to be a personal breakthrough of sorts. "During my career, I've always put a barrier between myself and the technology," he admits. "But on this movie I was branching out more with the ENR and the flashing. I also started underexposing the negative, which I had never done. And all of a sudden, a new door opened. I started going much further into darkness than I had before. I'd always felt that you could achieve the same type of look without underexposing the negative; you can, but you won't achieve the painterly quality that the grain gives you. In addition, the color saturation becomes different when you go two stops under — I'm talking about reading T2 on the keylight and shooting at T4. Here and there you might have a hint of light somewhere, reflecting off some glass or something, but you don't want to go more than T2 because you'll start to mess things up."

Kaminski's fascination with grain led him to push his emulsions throughout the picture. "I mainly used Kodak's EXR 5248 and 5293," he says. "I pushed the 48 a full stop, and occasionally two stops; I pushed the 93 a full stop. I also used the Vision 500T 5279 stock for certain things, but I didn't push it, because to my view it started falling apart. If you push the 500T a full stop, the contrast becomes higher than I would like, and the shadow areas go a bit greenish and muddy."

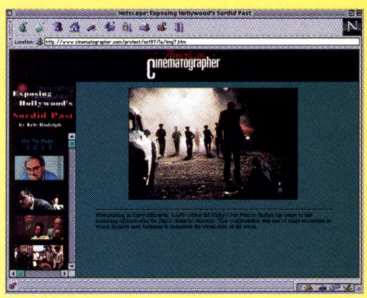
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Referring to his use of China balls on the show, Kaminski concedes that he had never been a fan of the fixtures, but says that his tests for *Amistad* convinced him of their value. "A long time ago I was playing with them, but I never really learned how to use them properly. On a few occasions I would grab a China ball, look at it and say, 'Nah, I don't like it.' But on this movie we started playing with them again, and I think I've finally learned how to work with them a bit. China balls are very interesting, because you can move them up and down during a take; it becomes a very convenient way to light. But China balls are not really durable, and you still have to shape the light that you get from them. It's also problematic to attach them to C-stands, because they always sway."

Kaminski's crew made things a bit easier for him by building a better ball. Devlin explains, "If you put a normal China ball on the floor, it will just roll over and burn a hole in itself. To avoid that type of problem, our best boy, Larry Richardson, designed a new type of space light for this show." This variation of the typical paper lamp offered a light source that could be adjusted more easily, as well as a flat bottom to prevent it from rolling over. Richardson also equipped the new units with hard mounts so that they could be attached to C-stands with greater stability. He constructed 12 of these special lights, which were used in conjunction with normal China balls for many of the film's scenes.

Prison time

The various techniques that Kaminski and co. employed on *Amistad* coalesce to impressive effect in scenes that take place within the forboding walls of the New Haven prison where the *Amistad* Africans spent most of their nearly two-year incarceration. The Goya-esque prison's exterior was built on location in Newport, Rhode Island, but scenes that occur in the structure's courtyard and interior cells were shot on an authentic-looking set constructed in Universal's largest soundstage by production designer Rick Carter and his crew. To facilitate fast filming, Devlin's crew pre-rigged the set's interiors with Chinese lanterns that were wired to a dimmer board.

"The interior prison scenes were relatively easy to do, because we had tested for all of the different lighting possibilities," Kaminski says. "But we also had to do a few big day exteriors completely on the stage, and that was tough. At first I didn't know how we were going to do it, but then I started thinking it out: 'Okay, day exterior, 1860, winter, New England. It should be very soft and full of textures, with blue haze, some small fires and smoke, and really burnt-out skies.'"

Simulating an authentic New England ambience involved a series of steps. First, Jim Kwiatkowski's rigging crew hung a white muslin around the set's perimeter and a huge 175' x 125' silk from the stage's ceiling. The muslin was lit five stops brighter than Kaminski's exposure so that it would burn out in the background of scenes. The set itself was lit from above and from the sides with a huge array of coop lights aimed through the silk; according to Devlin, these units generated a total output of approximately 550,000 watts. Kaminski details the setup: "The silk above the set served as our 'sky,' with the coop lights shining through it. But if you turned all the lights on, you'd get a substantial amount of ambient light, just as you would from real sky light. The coop lights had some diffusion on them, and everything was controlled from dimmer boards; we could turn them on and off so we wouldn't get so much flat light. I would allow the top light to be two stops brighter than my exposure; I also smoked it up and used black net filtration behind the lens to achieve an image with overblown highlights. Then I would bring in rather large 12' by 12' frames of muslin, and I would bounce some light through them to provide some fill light from the ground. In a real setting on an overcast day, you'd have top light, but it would be coming from all directions and filling up people's faces. To get that effect, we put our frames on the ground and pointed Dino lights at the frames. A majority of light would go through the muslin, but maybe 30 percent would be reflected, and it would have a really soft and beautiful quality. We occasionally made the light even softer by adding more diffusion to the already bounced light. In general, if we shot at T2.8, we had the top light at T5.6/8 and our faces at a third under T2.8, and it would be great."

For interior scenes, Kaminski and his crew generally used the Seven-Minute Drill for wider shots; for closer shots, they deployed their China balls and space lights. In order to enhance the reflectance of the set, the crew wet down the walls and bars of the prison set with glycerine.

The cinematographer also paid special attention to his color schemes, particularly with regard to any scenes involving firelight. "I didn't want to go too warm, especially in the prison scenes," he explains. "Instead, I was trying to achieve a pale white look from the candles. Steven really loved the idea of warm candles and warm torch light, but I wanted to take a different, less traditional approach to those sources. I felt that warm light motivated by candles and torches would make the prison look too friendly; my aim was to visually create the feeling of despair. To get that ambience, I used timing and colored gels to take some of the color out of the candles. I would light the actors' faces with a warmer light, and then in the lab I'd yank that color out so the candle would become pale white and the faces would become white rather than orange.

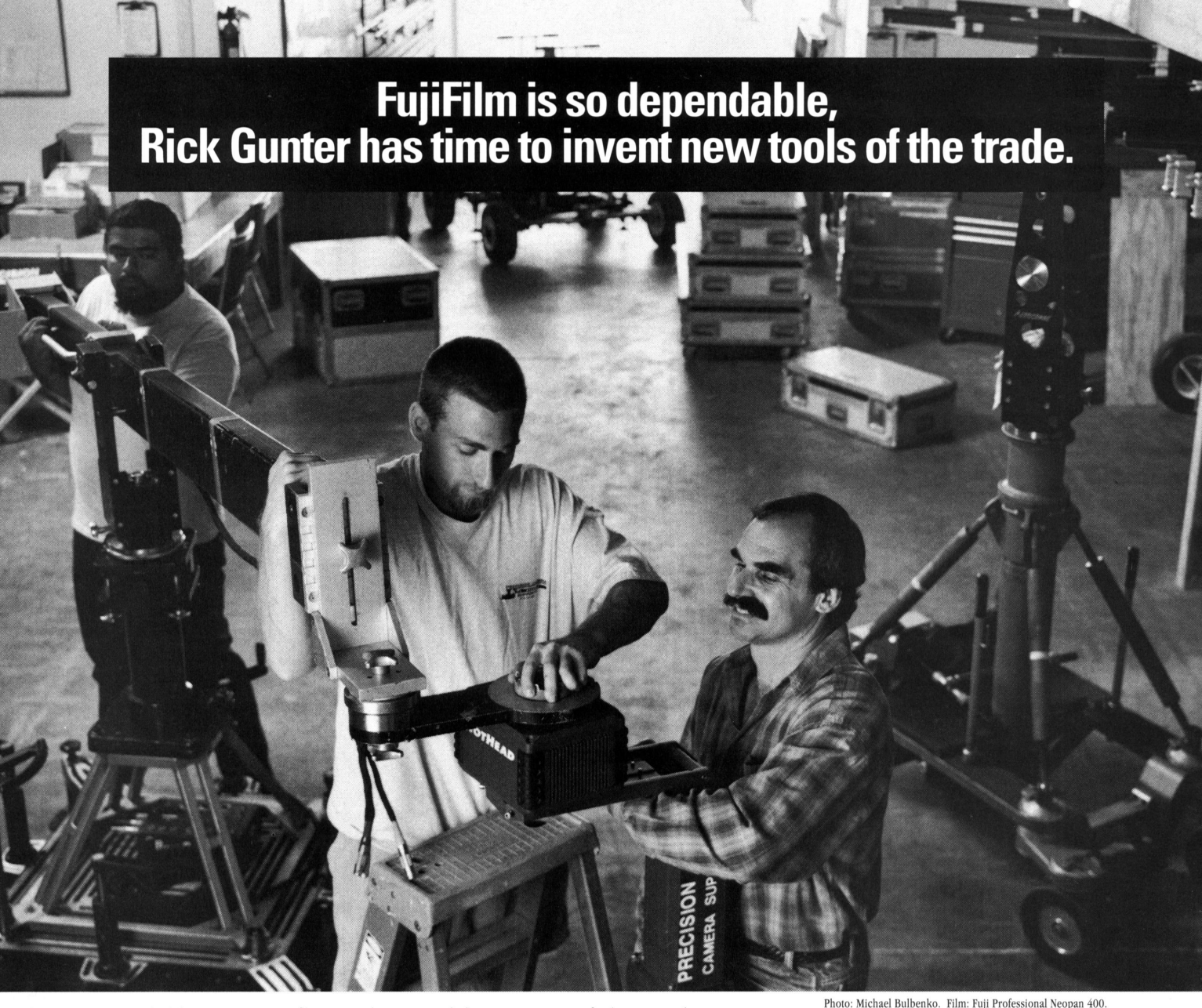


Photo: Michael Bulbenko. Film: Fuji Professional Neopan 400.

Most people like to get away from work now and then. Director of Photography Rick Gunter spends his off-hours outside the "Beverly Hills 90210" set developing new tools for...the set. What started as a hobby for the second-generation DP has become a successful business. Gunter, his son Brian, and key grip partners in Precision Camera Supports, use their knowledge as working pros to dream up more efficient camera supports, car mounts, and grip stands.

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"On the day exteriors, I was playing with the color saturation," he adds. "I wanted a kind of palish white without going too blue. When you start applying that kind of timing in the laboratory, there's always the chance of getting a bit of magenta, so I worked very closely with the guys at Technicolor, John Bickford and Frank Ricotta. They were pretty amazing; I've never had such consistent and beautiful dailies."

The case goes to court

Kaminski and the crew faced a slew of new challenges when the production went on location in New England. Many of the film's scenes were shot in and around Newport, Rhode Island's Washington Square, including several key courtroom scenes staged in the 258-year-old Colony House. The building's downstairs area was used to represent the first courtroom seen in the film, where the Africans are arraigned; an upstairs courtroom doubled as the appellate court where the bulk of the case is heard. The production was unable to secure permission to shoot scenes in the actual Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., so those climactic scenes were shot at a local stage.

Kaminski envisioned a progressive lighting scheme for the film's four main courtroom sequences (one in the arraignment court, two in the appellate court, and the Supreme Court finale). "The courtroom scenes advance toward the moment when the slaves win their freedom, and the lighting reflects that," he says. "The first courtroom we see is a bit messy, and it's slightly on the paler side. The lighting is slightly overblown, and there's a little bit of smoke in the air. The camerawork is a bit messy too, and we lit the Africans with a slightly greenish-blue light.

"As we progress to the other courtrooms, the lighting and the colors change. The issue at hand becomes rather simple — are these people slaves or human beings — and the lighting represents that a little bit through darkness, color, and the texture of the film. In the first two courtroom scenes, the ambience is more neutral, with very soft lighting and some smoke. We know that a verdict will be reached in the third courtroom scene, so I brought that knowledge to the light. The fate of the prisoners is still undecided; it's very much one way or the other. The lighting therefore becomes very contrasty — light and dark, without too many mid-range tones. It's very strong light, with dark shadows. We didn't use much smoke in that scene, and we didn't flash the film. I wanted to be really clear in what I was telling the viewers photographically.

"The verdict is that the Africans are free human beings, but then the case goes to the Supreme Court for the final drama. That was another case where I didn't want to use any tricks. I wanted the lighting to be very velvety, and the camera moves and composition to be really elegant. I was very clear with the lighting as well; I didn't want to create any subtext at that point. I still wanted some mood, but I didn't want it to be as moody as the third courtroom scene. When it came to the Supreme Court, 'elegance' was the key word."

Scenes shot in the upper courtroom at Colony House required crackerjack coordination and teamwork. "Because the real courtroom was a building designed for public functions, it was designed with the light in mind," Kaminski points out. "The room had five big [6' x 12'] windows along each side, and one behind the judge's desk as well. In the morning, the light would start from the left and then gradually arc into a beautiful sunset on the right-hand side. Naturally, we had to control that. On a few occasions we managed to apply the real sunlight for our scene by shooting our reverses when the sun was working for us. But we knew that we couldn't always get away with that, because the conditions outside were constantly changing."

To control the light, Devlin's lighting crew and Jim Kwiatkowski's grip crew each set up rows of five Condor cranes outside the courthouse, moving them around the building in sync with the sun; 18K lighting units were mounted on Devlin's cranes and aimed through diffusion, while 12' x 12' Griffolyns (used to block out the real sun when necessary) hung from the grip team's Condors. A lighting and grip Condor was assigned to each window along the east or west side of the building, depending on the time of day. "The natural light coming through the windows was really beautiful, but we all agreed that we should control the light as much as possible," Kwiatkowski explains. "Most of the time we used the lights and Griffolyns we had set up, making adjustments between takes; during lunch, the crew would move the Condors to the other side of the building. We controlled the window behind the judge with big nets in frames rather than NDs. By using a large 12' by 12' frame with double nets, we could control the lighting balance between the interior and the outside. We left some space between the frame and the actual window so Janusz could put a light through the window without lighting the nets. The toughest part of the whole thing was that the weather outside the courthouse kept changing, which made things a bit difficult for the guys manning the cranes."

Perhaps the most striking courthouse scene occurs during the testimony of a British naval officer who has found some discrepancies in the Spaniards' account of the *Amistad*'s journey. This sequence is suffused with rich golden tones, and portions of it unfurl in slow-motion (at 28 fps) to convey the turmoil roil-

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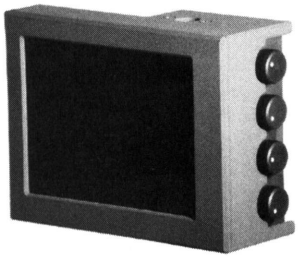
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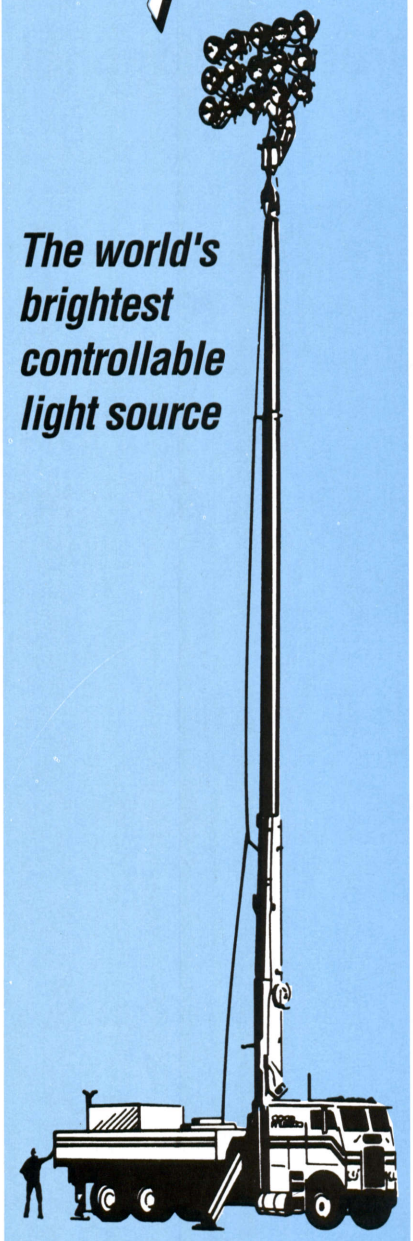


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ing within Cinque's mind. Kaminski says, "In that particular scene, we were trying to evoke a sense of how abstract and surreal this whole courtroom procedure seems to Cinque. To get that effect, I used a combination of 3/4 CTO and 1/2 straw gels on my HMI lights, in addition to the usual 85 correction on the camera lens. I wanted a sense of deep shadows and really bright sunlight coming through the windows, especially on the British captain, who is a very opinionated and edgy character. The lights were about five stops brighter than my exposure, and they were placed in a way that would create really strong beams and hot highlights on objects in the room."

Kaminski notes that throughout the film, Spielberg eschewed the elaborate camera moves that have become one of his trademarks, opting instead for a more proscenium-like frame. "There are only three dolly moves in the entire film: two pushes on Anthony Hopkins, and a push into Djimon's face," the cinematographer attests. "We wanted to keep things very realistic, and big camera movements can sometimes detract from the realism. Steven wanted to challenge himself, and I think it's much harder to create movement for a scene through the use of panning, tilting and blocking. When you're in a courtroom, you're watching and not moving; people move toward you and away from you, and it's very dramatic. We wanted the audience to feel as if they were observers in the courtroom."

The filmmakers occasionally amped up the courtroom tension by using wide-angle Zeiss Superspeed lenses on their Panavision Platinum camera. "The Zeiss 27mm is my favorite lens, and Steven likes it too," Kaminski says. "We also used the 20mm, 24mm and 29mm. For close-ups or exterior day shots, we'd go with the 85mm, 100mm and 135mm Zeisses. I'm not a great fan of zooms, and neither is Steven, so we didn't use those. Aside from some of the courtroom scenes, I really didn't use specific lenses to create emotions. The scenes involving the boats were so dramatic and realistic that they didn't need much help from the lenses."

Setting sail on land and sea

The film's boat scenes certainly leave a vivid impression of the horrors that the Africans endured on both the *Tecora* and the *Amistad*. Although portions of these sequences were shot with real ships on the Pacific Ocean, the filmmakers also used some old-fashioned ingenuity to simulate seabound drama within both a Universal soundstage and a Van Nuys airplane hangar.

Scenes created on the actual ocean were filmed on two different historic schooners: Maryland's state ship, *The Pride of Baltimore*, on the East Coast; and California's state ship, *The Californian*, off the coast of San Pedro. Both ships were painted and dressed to resemble the *Amistad* in various states of disrepair.

In order to shoot more effectively at sea, the production company was moved to a "floating city" set up just over a mile off the San Pedro coastline. This flotilla included a 200' by 60' barge that could accommodate 50-ton cranes and all of the other necessary facilities and equipment. Also available were passenger boats to ferry people back and forth to shore, camera boats, chase boats to move crew members from ship to ship, and tug boats to tow the barge itself. "It was a producer's nightmare," Kaminski recalls. "However, Colin Wilson — whom I'd like to work with all the time — and Paul Deason were the right people to face that situation."

One vessel that proved invaluable to the filmmaking process was a prototype SWATH (Small Water-Plane Twin-Hull) boat designed for the Navy. "That boat worked out great," says key grip Kwiatkowski. "It was small and really maneuverable.

In fact, the SWATH boat was so stable in the water that we actually mounted an Enlouva crane on it. The Enlouva had a 16' arm, and we hung a Wescam from it; that setup was fantastic, because it allowed us to get both high- and low-angled shots."

"When we were shooting at sea, we pretty much used natural light and bounce cards," Kaminski adds. "We kept it fairly straightforward, but it was still rather difficult to shoot because the ship was going up and down. Placing the camera was difficult, and the sea was fairly high. To keep the camera stable, we nailed it down on the deck. When I saw the finished movie, I wished that there was more bounce in the image to show the way it really was on the ship. The film doesn't really reflect the hardships that were involved in photographing those scenes.

"We mainly did day exteriors on the ocean," he adds. "Night exteriors and interiors involving the ships were all done on stage."

Kaminski found it even more difficult to re-create the feeling of sea travel on dry land. An 85 percent scale model of the *Amistad* was built in the Van Nuys hangar, while a similarly sized hull section, used for interior scenes, was constructed in Universal's Stage 12.

The ship in Van Nuys was built on a system of air bags which could be inflated and deflated to provide the appropriate rocking motion. Because the hangar had a semi-circular ceiling, the crew found themselves working without the usual corner space; as a result, the lighting technicians had to find an efficient way to illuminate the boat set, which took up most of the structure's free space. Key grip Jim Kwiatkowski enlisted the aid of rigging key grip Charley Gilleran, who built several long, narrow truss rigs that were hung from the hangar's ceiling. These fixtures were attached to chain motors that allowed them to articulate up and down; the illumination they provid-

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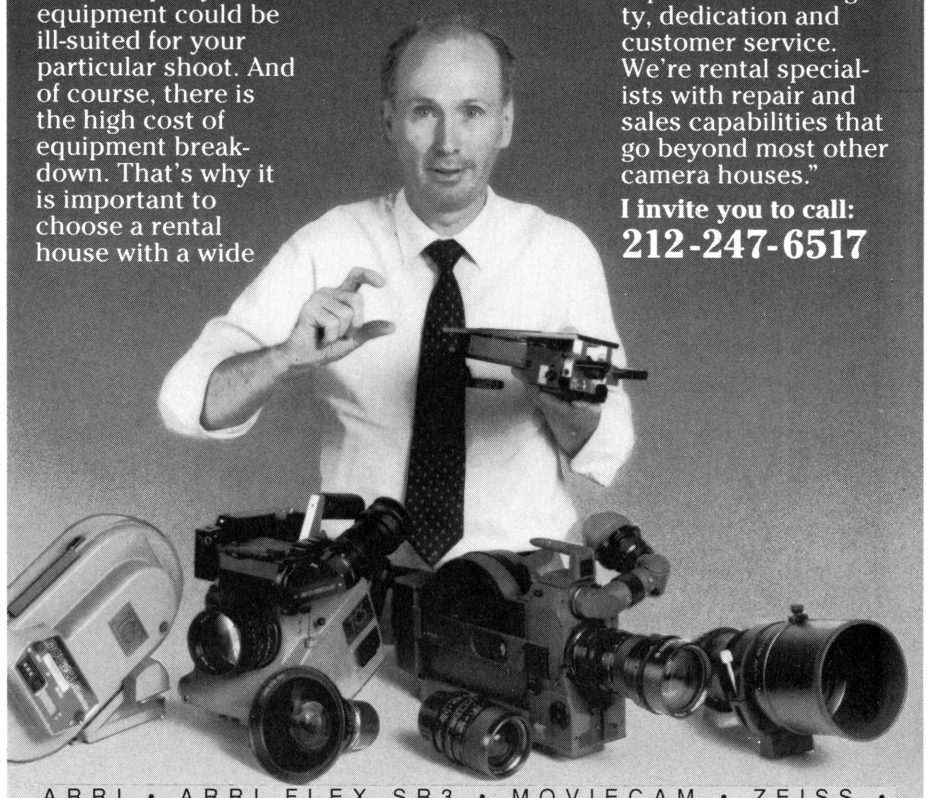
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ed was generated by rows of Dino lights and nine-light Fay units shining through both diffusion and muslin. "We had 6' by 80' truss rigs on both the port and starboard sides of the ship, and 6' by 40' rigs at the front and back," Kwiatkowski details. "It was a really great system, and the reflections off the ship looked beautiful. We also used several different camera support systems to get interesting angles: a Titan arm with an extension, a rolling 12' by 12' scaffold with an Enlouva crane on it, and a Zeus crane for a third camera."

"Shooting the night exteriors of the *Amistad* in the hangar was one of the biggest challenges we faced on this show," Kaminski attests. "The truss rigs really helped, because when you're working with Steven you have to be prepared to shoot in any direction. I was getting a reading of about T1.4 for my ambient light. There were some lanterns on the deck to motivate my keylight, which was at a T2/2.8 split. I shot at 2.8. But even if I didn't have any more light from the lanterns, I still shot at T2.8; I would just be two stops under.

"On a few occasions we would put a slightly harder light on a Chapman crane and move the crane across the masts and ropes to create some shadow movement. It was all very subtle, because I didn't want the lighting to be vulgar. I just wanted to create a bit of movement, especially when Steven didn't want to wait for the air bags to get moving."

The film's opening mutiny sequence involved even more practical effects work. The lightning flashes were provided by Lighting Strikes units; the crew used three huge water tanks to send "waves" crashing over the deck of the ship, and rain bars to simulate a stormy ambience. "The Lightning Strikes units are really ingenious devices, but if you punch them too often they tend to lag a bit, and you have to wait a few seconds for them to unlock," Kaminski says. "Other than that, they were really great. My general stop in those scenes would be a stop and a third or a stop and a half under, and then the lightning would come in.

"The air bags under the ship gave us really nice movement, and we used the big tanks to dump the water over everything. We would do one or two takes with all of the effects, but then it would take 20 minutes to reset everything."

Kaminski's nerves were frayed even further when Spielberg told him that he wanted to have another miniature boat pass by the *Amistad* in one scene. "The shot of the two ships is a wide shot, and the second boat was pulled across a little tank of water by a rope," the cinematographer explains. "As you look past the first boat, you see the miniature boat moving by in some fog against a black background. I was biting my nails when I found out I had to do that. I said to myself, 'Well, I've shot poor man's process with a car, so what if I just make the car much bigger and have another car passing behind it? If I add some smoke and light it from the back, it will give me a little bit of depth…'

"It sounded like a good idea, but when we were actually doing all of that on the set, it looked really hokey to me; as I was looking through the lens, I was thinking, 'This is ridiculous, it's going to look stupid! What are we doing here?' But when we watched the dailies, it looked real! I couldn't believe it!"

Equally classic methods were used to generate authentic ambience for interior scenes on the Stage 12 ship set. Since this set was not on a motion base, the crew created a sense of movement by choreographing the actors and the lighting. Devlin details, "For day scenes involving the ship's hold, we used T-5 beam projectors to create hot shafts of light streaming through the openings in the top of the ship. We hung those from trapezes with rope, and I had all of these fellows on top of the boat

moving the beams back and forth so you'd get the feeling that the boat was moving in relation to the sun. Aside from the T-5 projectors, we didn't use too much; we'd use the Seven-Minute Drill when we wanted to see into the shadows of the hold a bit.

"The days scenes, of course, had the sun as an obvious source. In terms of the night scenes in the ship's hold, if you're willing to accept some moonlight coming through the portholes, I think we've completely succeeded in creating a poor man's process on the boat. It really seems as if the boat is on the ocean."

Vacation break

After completing *Amistad,* Kaminski and his core crew (which, in addition to Devlin, Kwiatkowski and best boy Richardson, also includes camera operator Mitch Dubin, first assistant Steven Meizler, second assistants Tom Jordan and Mark Spath, and electrician Marek Bojsza) winged off to Europe to shoot Spielberg's next picture, *Saving Private Ryan.* After completing work on this elaborate World War II film, which is scheduled to be released this summer, Kaminski became determined to take his long-awaited sabbatical. He points out, however, that the highly competitive field of filmmaking often dissuades cinematographers from exercising their right to some well-earned down time. "All of us in the industry have fears about getting the next job, or keeping our crews together, but I think it's very important to take time off between movies. When you take a break, you become a human being again and relate to the world on a human level. Otherwise, you're just on a set all the time. It's important to participate in real life so you can apply those experiences to your work. I've done four movies in a row and right now I have no interest in working.

"Of course," he admits with a sheepish grin, "I'm still scared that I'm not going to work this year!" ■

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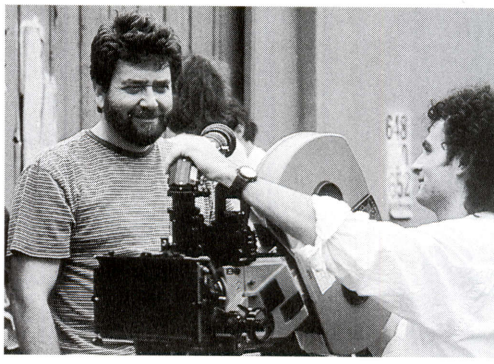
Quentin Tarantino and Guillermo Navarro exploit L.A. locations in *Jackie Brown,* a jazzy tale of jive-talkin' double-crossers.

by Andrew O. Thompson

Photography by Darren Michaels

Hollywood partnerships sometimes come about in odd ways. Before shooting Quentin Tarantino's new film, *Jackie Brown,* Mexican cinematographer Guillermo Navarro knew the writer/director primarily as an actor. The cameraman first met Tarantino in his native land while shooting filmmaker Robert Rodriguez' high-octane action film *Desperado,* in which the ever-hip auteur makes a cameo as a gringo jokester who is blown away by a humorless Mexican gangster. The next time Navarro saw Tarantino on a set, the latter was once again hamming it up for the cameras in a self-parodying role for the anthology film *Four Rooms;* after completing Rodriguez' segment, Navarro shot a few scenes for Tarantino's episode. On both films, Tarantino was able to observe the director of photography's working methods firsthand. After the duo crossed paths yet again — on Rodriguez' vampire road flick *From Dusk 'Till Dawn* (written by and starring Tarantino, the consummate multi-hyphenate) — the filmmaker decided that Navarro would be his ideal collaborator for *Jackie Brown.*

Outlining the visual strategy for this new film, Tarantino offers, "As far as the look was concerned, I wanted the entire production to be





Photos courtesy of Miramax Films.

very down-and-dirty, almost in the same style as *Reservoir Dogs* [photographed by Andrzej Sekula, see *AC* Nov. '92]. I wanted *Jackie Brown* to have richness and depth, but I wanted it to look more 'real.' My other films do look very 'real,' but at the same time there's a 'splashy-movie' quality to them. I just wanted to be able to move on the run, and I knew Guillermo could do that."

To give his crew a basis — but not a blueprint — for this gritty, realistic look, Tarantino screened Ulu Grosbard's 1977 film *Straight Time* (shot by Owen Roizman, ASC). The director says that he admires the film's raw vision of L.A., as well as its blending of location and studio work with a cinematographic style that mimics an available light ambiance. Tarantino and Navarro also watched Robert Culp's 1972 action melodrama *Hickey and Boggs* (photographed by Bill Butler, ASC) and Peter Bogdanovich's 1981 farce *They All Laughed* (Robby Müller, BVK, NSC). The director felt that each of these films made interesting and realistic use of the metropolitan landscapes of L.A. and New York, respectively.

Tarantino also selected Navarro because of the cinematographer's non-possessive attitude toward the camera. "Since I wasn't acting in this movie, I wanted to do more hands-on camera operating than I'd done before," admits Tarantino. "I knew from Guillermo's work with Robert that he wouldn't have a problem with that. Actually, he became very much like a teacher, and we had a terrific operator, Dan Kneece, who was totally on-board as well: after I would operate a shot, both of them would say to me, 'Now, you want to remember to keep his face in this kind of frame.' Their input made it a really wonderful experience."

In adapting Elmore Leonard's crime thriller *Rum Punch*, Tarantino transplanted the book's narrative from Miami's South Beach to L.A.'s South Bay, an area which encompasses the towns of Torrance, Hawthorne, Carson, Wilmington, Long Beach, San Pedro, Palos Verdes, Inglewood and Marina Del Rey. The only South Bay site Tarantino had previously utilized on film was the Hawthorne Grill, the eatery which bookends *Pulp Fiction*. Explains Tarantino, "I don't know anything about Florida, and didn't really look forward to shooting the movie there. Having grown up in the South Bay, I know it really well — from the affluent areas to the seedier areas. I definitely felt that I could bring [that knowledge] to the material to make it mine. Besides, people shoot in Florida all the time — *nobody* shoots in the South Bay."

Given his familiarity with the area, Tarantino penned the script specifically for locations which he scouted on his own during the writing process. He says, "If you're writing about an area in Los Angeles from memory, and your memory goes back more than a year or year-and-a-half, you can make big mistakes, because L.A. is so transient: you can live in the place for 15 years, but if you leave and go back two years later, the Arby's that was there forever is gone, and an El Pollo Loco is in its place. The entire movie pretty much takes place within 20 minutes of the airport, except for one section set in Hollywood, and another in downtown L.A. This works very organically, since Jackie is a stewardess who lives in Hawthorne, which is right next to LAX [Los Angeles International Airport]."

As the film begins, stewardess Jackie Brown (Pam Grier, star of such cult Seventies "blaxploitation" films as *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*) is trying to make ends meet as an employee of the Mexican charter company Cabo Air. To compensate for her paltry paycheck, Jackie occasionally facilitates international transactions for Ordell Robbie (Sam Jackson), a shiftless gun-runner and new-jack-of-all-trades. When not running scams, Robbie hangs out with his somewhat awkward crimi-



Opposite: Sassy stewardess Jackie Brown (Pam Grier) unloads a barrage of attitude. Bottom left: Navarro and first assistant Ziad Douring prepare a setup. Below: Steadicam/A-camera operator Dan Kneece, key grip Rick Stribling (on ledge) and dolly grip Robert "Dolly Bob" Ivanjack execute the film's opening sequence — an extensive tracking shot of Jackie hustling through Los Angeles International Airport.

Fly Girl

nal associate Louis Gara (Robert De Niro) — recently released from prison after serving a robbery sentence — and his ditzy, dope-smoking moll Melanie Ralston (Bridget Fonda). After being caught with $50,000 in cash and small packet of cocaine on her person, Jackie is forced to take part in a complex sting operation concocted by federal agent Ray Nicolet (Michael Keaton) to bring Robbie down.

Given Tarantino's affinity for discourse, Navarro found his greatest challenge on *Jackie Brown* to be devising a unique style for a dialogue-driven film set in some not-so-picturesque locales. Offers Navarro, "The fact that this was a contemporary story had a lot to do with how I approached the style. Anything seen in everyday life is absent of the 'magic' of style due to one's daily relationship to it. Interpretation is an ingredient one can sculpt with when addressing the future or the past, but not when dealing with a contemporary story which has strong doses of realism. This entire film takes place at locations everyone has a visual relationship to — such as a mall and an airport. There's no interpretation that can cross the everyday vision of these places, so I had to take a very realistic approach. But being on location can be very difficult, because



Right: Quentin Tarantino (along left wall) blocks out a shot of actor Michael Keaton (playing Federal agent Ray Nicolet) with Steadicam and A-camera operator Dan Kneece. Below: Jackie converses with bail bondsman Max Cherry (Robert Forster) in the food court of the South Bay's mammoth Del Amo Mall.

you don't have any of the benefits you'd have on a soundstage, where you can make lighting and production design decisions — you're just stuck with the space. Since the story is very dialogue-driven, it became complicated to execute some of the shots [in a visually interesting way]."

The widescreen compositions in Tarantino's directorial debut, *Reservoir Dogs*, were dictated more or less by a scene's action; much like the subjective observations of a roving eye, the heist film's involving camerawork often veers into a kinetic, handheld style. In contrast, *Pulp Fiction* (again shot by Sekula) plays out mainly in proscenium-style frames; handheld maneuvers are seen only during crises like the Hawthorne Grill robbery, and Steadicam shots (such as the initial survey of the nostalgic Jack Rabbit Slim's eatery) are equally scarce.

"The fact that this was a contemporary story had a lot to do with how I approached the style. Anything seen in everyday life is absent of the 'magic' of style due to one's daily relationship to it. Interpretation is an ingredient one can sculpt with when addressing the future or the past, but not when dealing with a contemporary story which has strong doses of realism."

— Guillermo Navarro

The camera motion in the 2 1/2-hour *Jackie Brown* — which Navarro shot with Moviecam Compacts in the spherical 1.85:1 aspect ratio — combines both of these styles. The first 90 minutes of this character-driven picture establish the plot primarily through exposition sequences that allowed the cameraman to indulge in "portrait photography" which treats the faces of various characters as landscapes in and of themselves. Tarantino dubs such shots "Sergio Leone close-ups," which basically consist of "tight close-ups in which the top of the frame ends on the actors' foreheads and the bottom of the frame ends on the bottom of their chins." He adds, "It's a very strong choice to shoot them like that, since we used actors who have cool-looking faces. This cuts together well, especially in certain dialogue scenes, because their faces hold the screen."

Navarro adds, "The framing depended upon the state of the conversation, or how much interac-



tion there was [between the scene's principals]. We did do a lot of side close-ups, but not just close-ups where someone is almost talking to the camera just off the lens; we did a lot of shots that had more separation: the close-up is a profile, and there's no relationship with the eyeline of the person who is being spoken to. Many times, we let the scene go into a two-shot, because the shot was about *that* interaction. That type of framing allows another scene to be cut in with more traditional coverage, but it also gives you freedom to use the frame to help both characters."

The cinematographer made frequent use of Clairmont's Swing-Shift lens system, as he had on his previous project, the offbeat superhero adventure *Spawn* (see *AC* Aug. '97). He found this system to be particularly useful for shooting in-car conversations which required that the faces of two characters be in focus, and for lending dramatic tension to certain scenes by bringing together or pulling apart the actors'

COP LAND
Cinematography by
Eric Edwards



GOOD WILL HUNTING
Cinematography by
Jean Yves Escoffier



JACKIE BROWN
Cinematography by
Guillermo Navarro



MRS. BROWN
Cinematography by
Richard Greatrex, B.S.C.



SHE'S SO LOVELY
Cinematography by
Thierry Arbogast, A.F.C.



WELCOME TO SARAJEVO
Cinematography by
Daf Hobson



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faces. Navarro details, "In one sequence, Jackie is in court being arraigned on charges of cocaine possession. One shot includes both the judge behind his podium and Jackie back in the gallery seats, and we brought the shot together at the moment when he is deciding her fate. We had to swing the lenses drastically, because it's a very severe shot — a close-to-the-lens profile of her, and the judge way back in focus."



Tarantino between takes with actress Bridget Fonda in the close quarters of a Playa Del Rey beachfront apartment.

Jackie Brown's final hour — set mainly within Torrance's Del Amo Mall — is, in the director's words, "very image-aggressive, consisting almost entirely of Steadicam moves following characters in real time. It's very voyeuristic." Typical of Tarantino's screenwriting style, this climax consists of one specific incident unfolding from the perspectives of several characters. The director notes that while the various viewpoints are subjective, they add up to an objective conclusion; in the end, the audience is able to put together all the pieces of the dramatic puzzle.

Exploiting LAX

Steadicam is also utilized in the film's opening credit sequence, which introduces Jackie Brown as she sashays through the bowels of Los Angeles International Airport. According to Tarantino (who recalls the actress' impressive reveals in *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown)* this segment was designed to be "the coolest Pam Grier opening sequence in film history." The lengthy shot follows Jackie as she glides along several automated walkways (also known as "people movers") and navigates hallways backed by huge bay windows revealing airplanes in transit; the climax of the camerawork is a nearly circular pan and track of a departure lounge, where the stewardess approaches a ticket counter.

Steadicam and A-camera operator Dan Kneece recalls his work on the shot: "I stood in a grip wheelchair with the Steadicam and a 50mm lens, as they pushed me alongside the people movers — in the film, you float along with her as she's gliding. We then had to slow down as she stepped off into a carpeted area, and speed back up to take her along another people mover. She was always getting on and off the movers, so there had to be a very smooth transition [between the moving and stationary surfaces].

"At the end of the run — as she hits the last people mover — I leaped off the wheelchair. I had her framed head-and-shoulders through that part of the terminal and around to the gate. But the shot couldn't look as if I was coming off a wheelchair; it had to look seamless and flowing. We did it with a straight Steadicam — no gyros. Just as we got to the gate, someone offscreen was there to deliver a line, and I whipped over to pick it up in a tight close-up. Finally, Pam came walking up to the background, and we picked her back up again — it's a very exciting shot."

The practical sources inside LAX varied enormously and included fluorescent, mercury-vapor and tungsten fixtures. Despite this kaleidoscopic collage of color temperatures, only the fluorescents were swapped out with color-corrected tubes. Even though mercury-vapor lamps tend to emit a noticeable green spike on celluloid, most of these were left untouched. Navarro determined that Grier would only pass through them intermittently while being carried along the people movers. He also notes that "sometimes we couldn't replace the fluorescents, because we couldn't find color-corrected tubes to fit some of the older fixtures. I did a lot of shooting with magenta correction on the lens, and for some scenes we had to add green gels to the lights."

Gaffer David Lee says that the crew's lighting setup for this sequence brought to mind a moving locomotive train: "Key grip Rick Stribling and his crew put together these huge 16'-long Obie lights — one for each of the walkways — so that we would always have color-corrected fill lights moving with the camera. They were four 4' Kinos in a line, rigged up to the ceiling and cantilevered out and over camera, all mounted to doorway dollies. We also had a Wall-O-Lite rigged to a cable cart with an inverter and some car batteries. We led Pam with that to get some frontal modeling on her.

"It was quite a setup. Pam would start walking down a people mover, at a pretty good clip, with two grips and an electric towing a doorway dolly and its 16'-long Kino rig. Meanwhile, Dan Kneece was tracking her with his Steadicam as the dolly grip pushed him along in a wheelchair, and electrician Deke Keener and I were leading her with the Wall-O-Lite on the cable cart. When we hit the end of one 'people mover,' the traveling Obie rig would have to stop as Pam walked in front of a long stretch of windows. We would race ahead with our Wall-O-Lite to be ready to catch her on the next walkway, where another 16' Obie rig was standing by. As we raced along like this, Quentin was yelling "'Faster, faster!' Pam would start jogging and we would be running along, trying to keep up with her while hauling these massive rigs. Finally, at the end of the shot, we had to dive out of the way so that the camera could get past us and do a 270-degree panning/track."

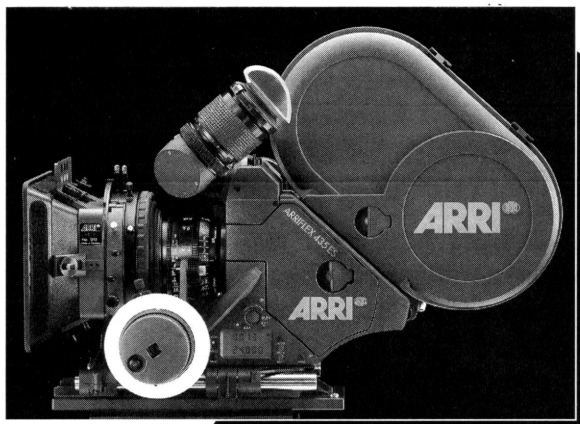
Beach Bulbs

The beachfront apartment inhabited by Robbie's bimbo girlfriend, Melanie, offered a multitude of lighting challenges during the production's week-and-a-half-long shoot there. The close quarters of this Playa Del Rey unit left little room for crew and camera operator, and its bright white walls offered constant glare generated by sunlight blasting through two large picture windows facing the Pacific Ocean. Navarro relates, "Obviously, we had the problem of the sun hitting the windows at the end of the day. We were also shooting very complex interactions involving three actors — Sam Jackson, Robert De Niro and Bridget Fonda — each of whom had to be lit in a particular way. On top of that, Quentin wanted a lot Steadicam shots that would rove and turn around in the same shot. Instead of trying to solve any of the 'problems' we'd find, I tried to work with the location and the interaction between the characters."

Many of these interiors required an unobscured beach vista to be seen through the two westerly windows; effecting sunlight through the panes therefore ran counter to the scene's demands. Navarro and his crew managed to solve this dilemma by setting up exterior lighting rigs just outside the camera's field of view: multiple 18K and 6K Pars on a Condors. Interior illumination was made easier through the use of Source Four theatrical fixtures. Recalls gaffer Lee, "One shot brought Sam Jackson and Pam Grier in the front door of the apartment and out to the balcony in a 180-degree tracking pan, which hinged around Robert De Niro sitting on a couch in the middle of the room. The camera was on the Steadicam with a very wide lens; of course, the lens revealed everything in the room, so there was nowhere to hide the lights except for right over the couch. To light him, we put silver cards just out of frame

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along the walls; over the couch, we rigged 12 Source Fours with 3/4 CTB on them, which we bounced into the cards. Even with the filtration, they were bright enough to get us to the level we needed, but they were small enough to be rigged overhead and remain out of the shot. The control they gave us allowed us to focus them precisely without using a lot of flags for spill. When De Niro sat down to do the scene, he looked up and saw all of these lamps suspended over his head and gave a little shudder."

Dark Shadows

The crew found no solace in Jackie's Hawthorne apartment, which was equally cramped. This setting is the backdrop for a confrontation between Jackie and Robbie, during which the two characters ratchet up the tension by taking turns at tweaking the knob of a standing halogen lamp. This three-minute-long night interior begins with the lamp on, falls into silhouette as the shiftless con man dims it down, and ends with the air hostess turning up the light as she regains her moral footing. Tarantino explains, "I liked the idea of pulling off a scene with two black actors and no light. I wanted to do it without cheating — turning the lights off, but still allowing the viewer to see everything. We wanted darkness with a rich depth. There's one moment when Jackie opens up the refrigerator as she's making Ordell a screwdriver; the refrigerator light becomes the only source. Sam is dressed entirely in black, and the only thing that holds any light is his glass, because the drink is orange. Pam has a white blouse on, and she literally walks into complete darkness; you can't see anything for two beats until she turns the halogen lamp back on. Then Sam walks over and dims it down again — it's very spooky."

Kneece adds, "I was tracking Pam [with a 25mm Zeiss Superspeed lens]. When the light went out, I had to guess where she was going to end up when she turned the lamp back on. She actually ended up silhouetted against a window, so we played a lot of the remaining dialogue that way. We did this all in one Steadicam shot, which was difficult because the video monitor went dark. Although we did have the ability to ride the exposure by using our focus system and one of its motors for adjustment, we didn't do that in this instance; the scene was lit in such a way that when the lights went out, the majority of the picture — except for the window — went black. At the end of the scene, the lights went back on at a proper exposure level."

Due the lack of space in Jackie's digs, standard filmmaking fixtures were out of the question. The space's primary illumination was generated by a quartz halogen torchiere and bounce-fill cast by tiny MR-16 units and the type of 150W globes typically used in vanity mirrors; additional fill emanated from Source Fours. Lee comments,

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"Quentin was adamant that the actors should be able to control the dimming of the lights themselves. He didn't want Pam to have to pretend to flip on a switch while an electrician tried to match her actions off-camera. Therefore, we wired up all of the lighting to dimmers and patched them together so that they were all controlled by the dimmer on our practical lamp.

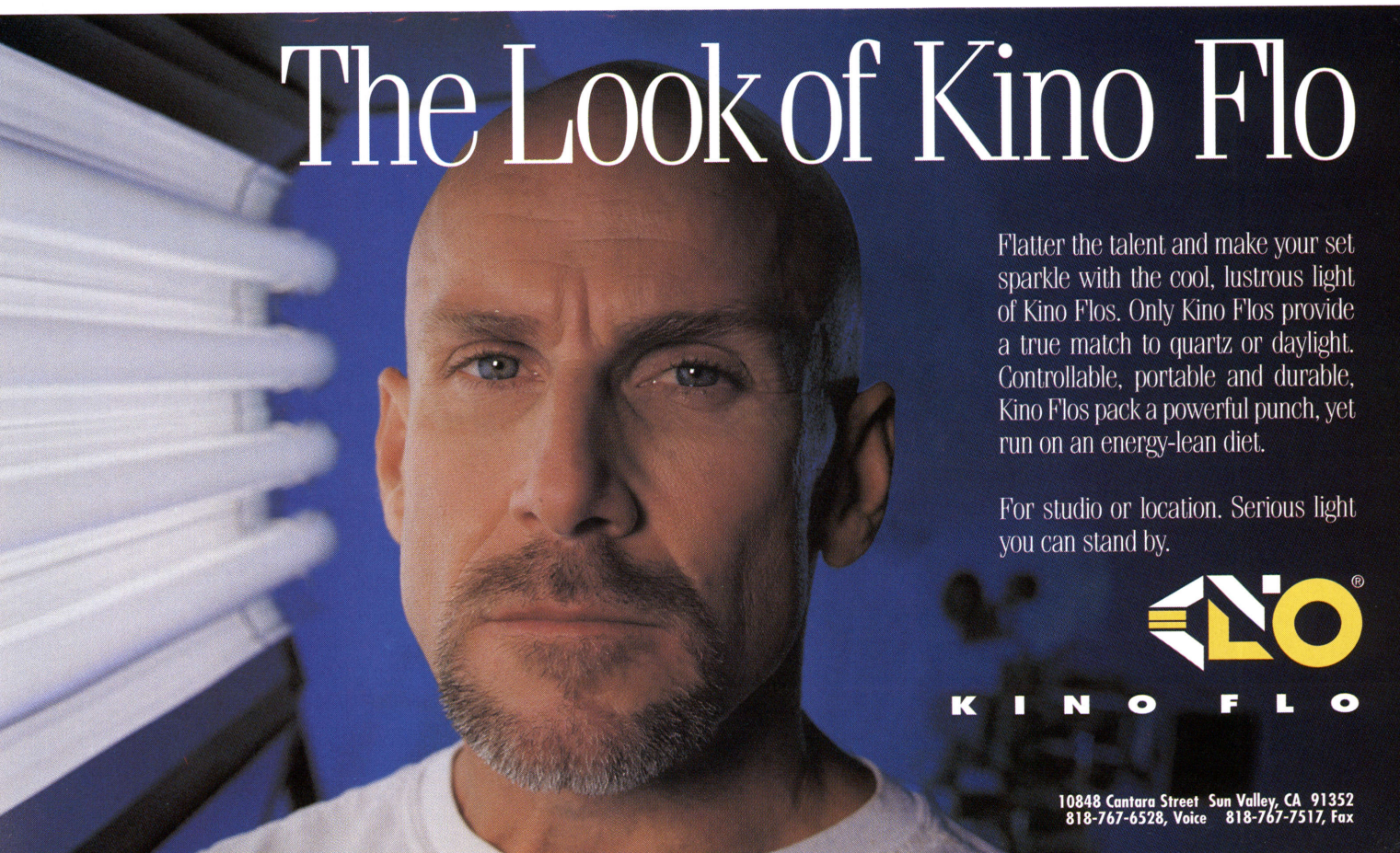


"We were shooting the Vision 500T 5279 stock, so we didn't need a lot of light. The walls of the set were painted a dark maroon color, but the ceilings were still white; the light from this torchiere bouncing into the ceiling was almost enough illumination by itself. We simply added a few more bounces where we could. The lighting was a bit flat, but the scene was more about the light going on and off rather than any one particular look. There was quite a difference between the two looks in that scene. When the lights were off, it was almost completely black; we added a bit of light outside so Pam and Sam would be silhouetted against something when they were by the window, but it wasn't much."

Gun-runner Ordell Robbie (Samuel L. Jackson) and his partner in crime Louis Gara (Robert De Niro) take a breather at the Cockatoo Inn, a disused bar located in the L.A.-adjacent city of Hawthorne.

Crimson Cocktails

One of *Jackie Brown*'s most extreme lighting setups illuminates Hawthorne's now-defunct Cockatoo Inn during a conversation between the stewardess and bail bondsman Max Cherry (Robert Forster). The pair are sitting in a booth so suffused with a red hues that, according to



Navarro, "the frontier of black skin and white skin [between the respective actors] is completely abolished."

The cinematographer had some of the room's fixtures swathed with Lee's 106 Primary Red gels; these lights were augmented with Source Fours bounced into white cards, and some softer silver cards for a more governable ambiance. The scarlet shading, however, often proved too overwhelming. To lend the crimson monochrome a spectrum balance, various gels from Rosco's Cal Color System were placed on top of the Lee Primary Reds. Cal Color System gels are available in primary and secondary hues — green, magenta, red, blue and cyan — in predetermined increments. Explains Lee, "[If we hadn't used Cal Color,] it would have been difficult to find a particular gel which matched the Primary Red in hue, but was not as intense a color. Our options would have been limited if we had felt that the red on Pam's face was too oppressive. To try and retain some control over this strong red color, we used different values of Rosco's Cal Color Cyan. With them, we were able to control the redness of the gel in known amounts simply by adding a few points of cyan as needed. We would also add one of the Cal Color Reds to make sure that the few white lights working in the scene would read as neutral in tone."

Mall Rats

The ensuing drama leading up to the film's climax occurs in the South Bay's sprawling Del Amo Mall, which the production occupied while the facility was open during regular business hours. As Lee details, the crew faced a lighting situation similar to the one they'd worked with at LAX: "We didn't have the ability for extensive control because we were shooting in a working mall when all the stores were open. One of the few places we could actually rig lights out of the public's way was in the food court, but that only helped us for the specific area of action [around actors Pam Grier and Robert Forster]. We had to let all of the other sources around them go uncorrected. There were sources of every type: daylight-matched fluorescents, tungsten-matched fixtures, sodium mercury vapors, neon and regular tungsten. We could have sent in a team with thousands of globes to change out all the fluorescents and tungstens and to turn off all of the discharge sources, but there would have always been another store in frame which we had missed."

The centerpiece of the film's last act is a sequence in which Jackie heads up a police sting operation in Macy's, swapping a department store bag containing $500,000 worth of marked bills — a ploy designed to ensnare Robbie in the police's booby-trap. Unbeknownst to both the cops and the criminals, however, the savvy stewardess has planned a multiple double-cross designed to leave her both scot-free and rolling in dough.

The production had access to Macy's for two consecutive nights. Navarro notes that this sequence, shot almost entirely with the Steadicam, was "built on the respective perspectives of the different characters in the scene: Jackie, Max Cherry, and Louis Gara and Melanie Ralston. The scene plays out repeatedly from their different viewpoints as they weave behind and around clothing racks in the stores, and in and out of the changing rooms. The Steadicam was a great help in creating the dynamic of each character's subjective point of view."

One particular shot, for example, trails Jackie down an escalator, through Macy's and into the mall's main hallway, ending in a 360-degree circular tracking shot which conveys her panicked state of mind. Says Lee, "The scene itself is about having those shots from the different angles and being able to cut between the various points of view. Guillermo felt that it was more important to be able to shoot freely than to light each shot to the fullest.

"Like any department store, Macy's has lots of tungsten spotlights, accent lights and fluorescents. We swapped out all the fluorescent tubes so the scene would at least be tungsten-balanced, but we shot with mostly available light. We added a couple of Wall-O-Lites where we could and a couple of lights up in the drop ceiling. Once again, we did a lot of traveling — walking with either lights or bounce boards. We couldn't count on having enough time to put a light up, take it down, and put another light up somewhere else to relight for another shot."

That's a Wrap

With *Jackie Brown* in wide release, Tarantino is currently executive-producing both a prequel and sequel to *From Dusk 'Till Dawn.* His next feature as a director is tentatively slated to be a period prison picture, which he describes as a "Western-genre *Papillon.*" Navarro, meanwhile, is prepping a Caribbean shoot for the action thriller *Deep Sea Blue,* his second collaboration with director Renny Harlin (they first teamed on 1996's *The Long Kiss Goodnight*).

"I've been able to build good relationships with the directors I've worked with, so we tend to collaborate again," Navarro says. "I've had good experiences with Robert Rodriguez, Renny Harlin and Quentin. Collaboration is somewhat of a cold word to describe what is a very strong bond — making movies is very demanding, both emotionally and physically. It's a big chunk of your life, and it can become a very existential experience." ■

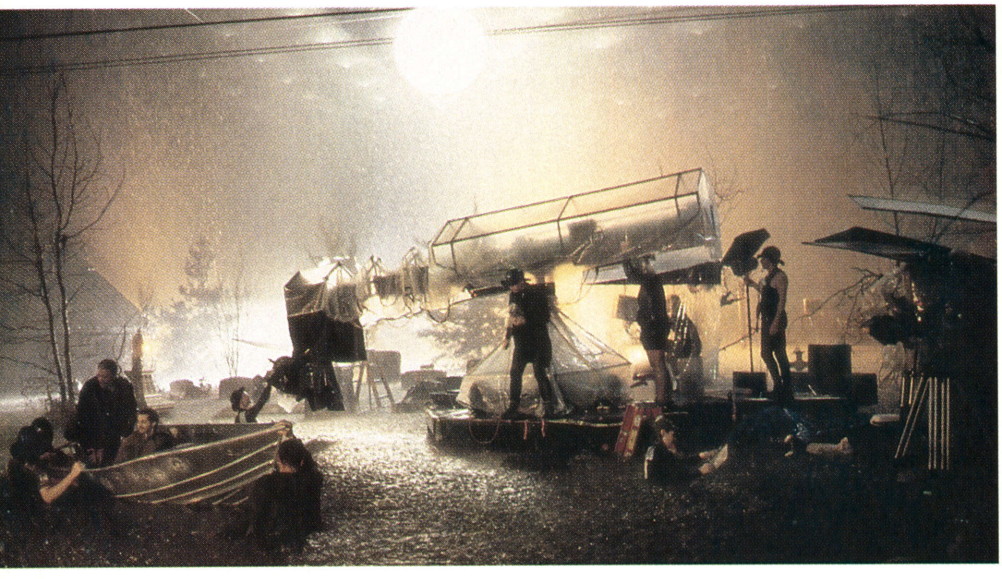

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Photographing at Full Flood

Cinematographer Peter Menzies Jr., ACS lends a keen eye to action-oriented heist film *Hard Rain.*

by George Turner

Photography by Ricahrd Foreman, Jr.





Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

There's nothing more challenging for a cinematographer than shooting a film for another director of photography, especially when the person in charge is an acknowledged master of the craft. Just ask Peter Menzies, Jr., ACS whom director Mikael Salomon, ASC selected to shoot his new action-adventure picture, *Hard Rain.* "I had never worked with Mikael before, but I was a big fan of his work," says Menzies.

The son of a leading Australian cinematographer, Menzies worked on numerous films as an assistant and operator for Russell Boyd, ACS. He brought Menzies to America to help him with extensive New York location work on the two *Crocodile Dundee* films. Menzies' first American movie as director of photography was the impressively photographed thriller *White Sands,* which he followed with *Posse, The Getaway, Die Hard With a Vengeance* and *A Time to Kill* (see *AC* Aug. 1996).

Menzies was brought in early in preproduction of *Hard Rain* on a part-time basis. He soon found that working for a fellow cinematograph-



Opposite page: The *Hard Rain* production team positions its waterproofed Technocrane. Center: An ambitious thief (Morgan Freeman) with designs on an armored car leads his cohorts through a flooded town.

pher had its advantages. "When I first went to the set, it was just an empty hangar," he recalls. "I'd go there for a few hours every couple of days and walk around with Mikael and production designer Michael Riva, and we'd all talk. Being involved right from the beginning was a great help to me. Mikael was all for it; I'm sure he used to get frustrated by not having enough prep time, and he was keen to help me."

Menzies found that being a "cinematographer's cinematographer" on *Hard Rain* was no problem at all. "Mikael is a very intelligent man, and we got along famously," he says. "He was understanding when I went to him and said, 'This is going to take some time, why don't we try something else?' When he'd see me walking up, he knew exactly what was going on, and why I wanted to talk to him. But when we were doing the flood scenes, he was so busy with the pure logistics of what he was doing that he was too busy to worry about what I was up to.

"We talked as much as we could, but when we were really up and running we weren't actually talking much because we were both so busy. He gave me plenty of freedom; he knew I wasn't going to do something he'd actually hate. Still I'd ask him things like, 'Is it okay, storywise, for these people to be in silhouette?' He got along well with my gaffer, operator and assistant, and collaborated very closely with us. I played around a lot with sodium-vapor lights, which we used throughout the movie. We spoke in the very beginning about how much he liked that look.

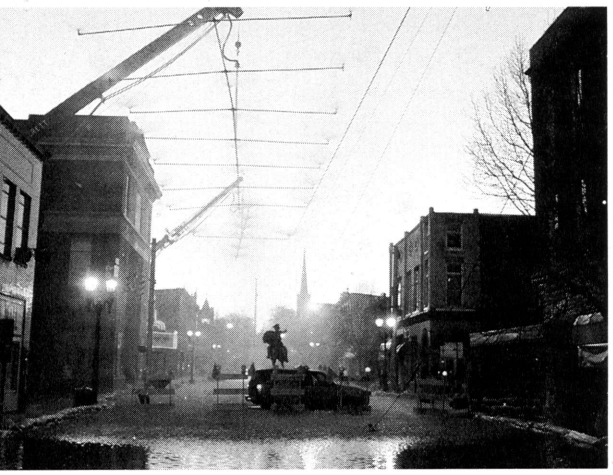
"The main problem with this picture," Menzies notes, "was something Mikael and I talked about during our first interview: the struggle of how much light we could put in and where we could put it in *from*. We kept practical lights on much longer than one might in a normal movie, but we had to be able to see

Photographing At Full Flood

something. We couldn't have people sitting in the dark for an hour and a half, so we had to justify keeping some lights on. Even at night, you'd expect to see just a little bit of detail or flashing lights in the [cityscape cyclorama] backing, so we had to light the backing as well as the tank set itself.

"The backing was quite easy to light," he admits, "because it was on dry land, but in the tank it was always a struggle to move lights around. Then we tried lighting balloons, and they really helped us out. They were flexible, safe, and provided a beautiful quality of light. When we floated the balloons, the rain obscured the power cords coming down from them. We didn't have to worry about lighting from Condors or towers or anything else. To see all of those glowing balloons floating up over the set was pretty surreal!"

Salomon and Menzies made careful choices in lighting the falling rain. The cinematographer explains, "It could look absolutely beautiful when we backlit it, but a flood isn't a beautiful thing. We didn't backlight much because we really didn't want a theatrical look; we wanted it to look real. Also, if we had backlit the rain, we wouldn't have had the depth we wanted on such a large set. It was great to see the whole set without it being washed out by backlit rain. Most of the time I'd crosslight it, but sometimes we'd just throw 360 degrees of light with the balloons. Quite often, you couldn't even see the rain falling. Instead, you could just see it on the water's surface, which really enhanced the realism."



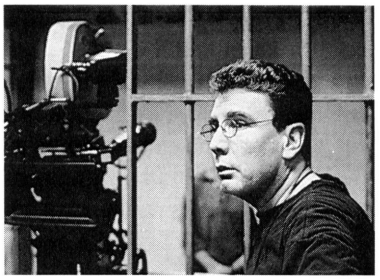
Right: Menzies plans his next shot. Below: A row of rain bars help to create the illusion of a downpour on location in Huntingburg, Indiana.

Menzies utilized two Panaflex cameras and two "Panavised" Arriflex 35-IIIs, framing his shots in the 2.35:1 Super 35 format. "This was my first time shooting in Super 35; my other films had all been anamorphic," he says. "We chose Super 35 to take advantage of its increased depth of field, and to exploit the wide-angle lenses that we couldn't have used with anamorphic. Even when we used a 14mm lens, the results were amazing. This was the first time I got to play around with the Primo spherical lenses, and they're wonderful. The entire film takes place at night, and because the rain tended to diffuse the image, I didn't use any filters at all. There was a lot of light flaring in different places in the frame, and that was when the Primo lenses really came into their own.

"I shot *Hard Rain* on Eastman Kodak's Vision 500T [5279] for nearly everything, and it's beautiful! We were on the stage throughout the shoot — except for five days when we went to Indiana, where I shot some EXR 5248. When we make the final anamorphic release prints — blowing up from the Super 35 negative — I think the Vision 500T is going to help us greatly. Its color separation and finer grain are just remarkable."

Menzies shares Salomon's enthusiasm for the Technocrane. "It can telescope out 8' or 9' — very quickly if you need it to — and it has a remote-control head. We initially thought we would do a lot of Steadicam work on the film, but the depth of the water made it too difficult. Instead, we could swing the crane and telescope the arm across the water, which gave us a very dynamic look and still allowed us to use traditional filming techniques."

Menzies has unstinting praise for the crews he has worked with in this country. "My crew, as on the other films I've done here, was entirely American," he says. "This was my third film with my operator, Robert Presley, and my fifth with my first assistant, Richard Mosier. Both of those guys have allowed me to really push the limits with Steadicam



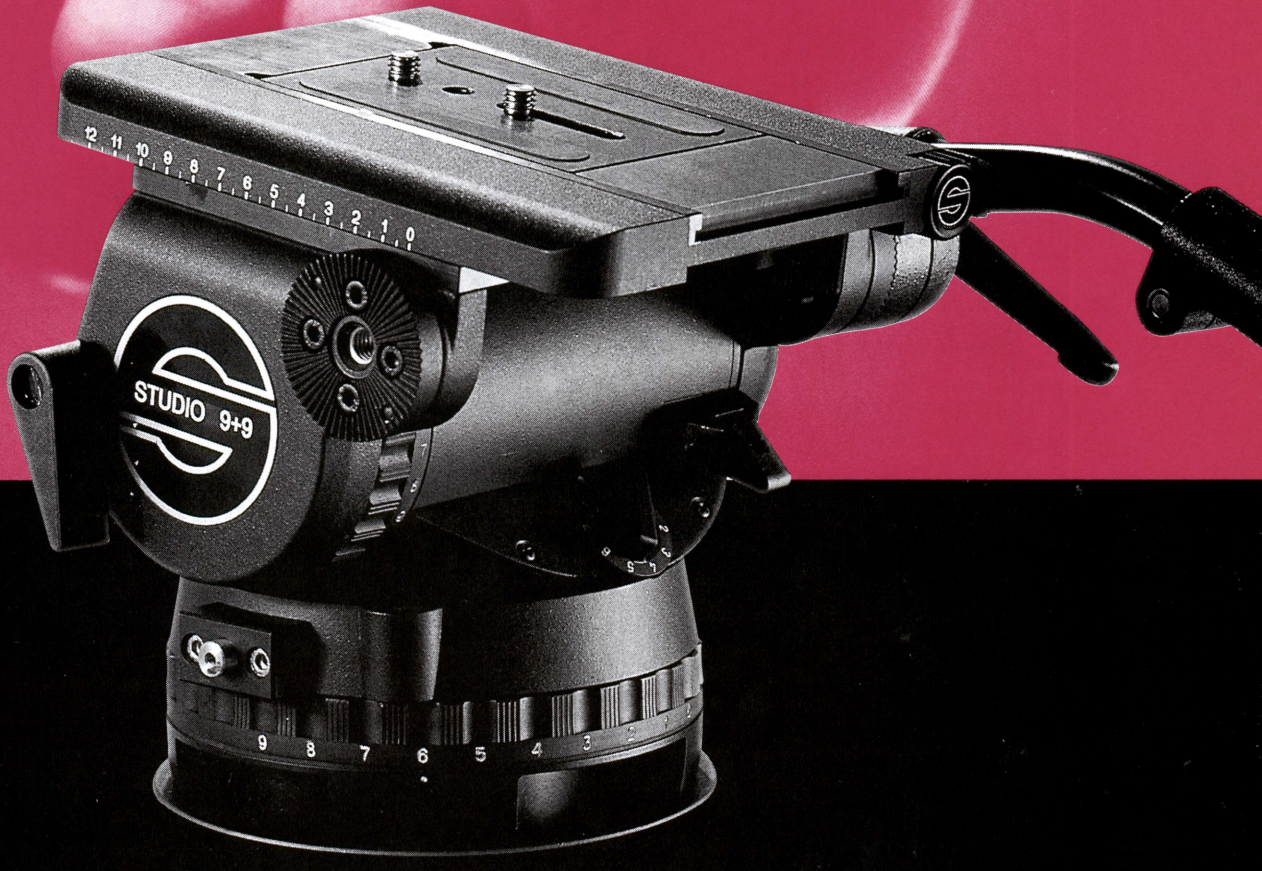
and handheld work. It was raining in every shot of *Hard Rain,* and Richard was fabulous in the way he protected the gear and kept us shooting. He came up with all sorts of devices to put in front of the lenses to keep them free of water."

The film's special effects supervisor was John Frazier *(Twister, Speed, Outbreak and Basic Instinct).* "He did an amazing job," Menzies enthuses. "Every day, the effects guys would pull something out of the hat for us. The film didn't have a huge budget, so we were mostly doing in-camera effects. There are only two greenscreen shots in the film, and nearly all of the computer work was just cleanup stuff. We did a few shots where we'd pan and tilt and they would put in the sky, and there were a couple of model shots. Occasionally the rain would cause rainbows, but the effects people would go in and remove those.

"In the end, we were proud that we did so much of the effects work in the camera. By doing most of it in the camera, we also didn't have to compromise in order to serve postproduction needs. We could keep the camera moving and alive." ■

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Wet and Wild



Mikael Salomon, ASC confronts a deluge of logistical rigors during his second directorial effort.

by George Turner

Photography by Richard Foreman, Jr.

Cinematographer-turned-director Mikael Salomon, ASC concedes that his latest project, *Hard Rain* (formerly titled *The Flood*), lived up to its title. However, he's quick to point out that his filmmaking team was undaunted by the film's soggy logistics. "We were working in 4' of water all the time and it was raining, but we didn't want those conditions to stop us from working the way we'd normally shoot a movie," says Salomon, who notes that the flood water was contained in a huge tank, while the rain fell from a network of pipes. "We wanted realism. When you see this picture, it will look like a normal movie, despite the fact that there's water everywhere."

Salomon, who began his film career in his native Denmark at the age of 17, made his directorial debut in 1993 with Amblin' Entertainment's *A Far Off Place.* He had already built an international reputation as a cinematographer, earning Academy Award and ASC Award nominations for his cinematography on *The Abyss;* an Oscar nomination



Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

(along with Allen Hall, Clay Pinney and Scott Farrar) for the visual effects in *Backdraft* (see *AC* May 1991), and a Cable Ace Award for cinematography on *The Man Who Broke 1,000 Chains*. Salomon's other credits as a director of photography include *Far and Away* (*AC* June '92), *Always, Arachnophobia* and *Torch Song Trilogy*.

Written by Brian Yost, *Hard Rain* is set in the small town of Huntingburg, Indiana, whose residents must evacuate after a series of heavy downpours causes a river to overflow. A pair of armored car drivers, Tom (Christian Slater) and his uncle Charlie (Ed Asner), are transporting $3 million in cash from the local banks to higher ground; along the way, however, they are stopped by Jim (Morgan Freeman) and his gang, who try to rob the couriers. Tom escapes with the money, but the robbers pursue him through increasingly dangerous floodwaters. With the town sheriff (Randy Quaid) occupied by the flood, Tom's only help comes from a gutsy young civilian named Karen (Minnie Driver).

Despite his many years as a cinematographer, Salomon found it surprisingly easy to hand the photographic work over to director of photography Peter Menzies Jr., ACS (see accompanying story on page 54). "This is my second movie as a director," he says. "The first time around, it was hard to let the cinematography go, but this time I was glad to do it because there was so much else to look after. When I met with Pete, we hit it off. He is a very gracious person to work with, and he always tried to accommodate what I wanted to do. I didn't ask him for the impossible, but sometimes I asked for something that would take a lot of doing. He had just come off *A Time to Kill* [see *AC* Aug. 1996], which I had seen and liked. I was also impressed by his work on *The Getaway, White Sands* and *Posse* — I especially liked the look of *Posse*. "

The decision to shoot in Super 35 instead of anamorphic, for a widescreen presentation, was made for practical reasons. "If I were shooting a picture outdoors, I'd use anamorphic," Salomon insists. "But we had huge surfaces to cover, as well as scenes where I wanted to start with a tight close-up and go to a wide shot. That's hard to do with an anamorphic lens. I had used Super 35 twice before as a cameraman, on *The Abyss* and *Backdraft*, so I felt comfortable with the format."

Huntingburg, Salomon assures us, is a real town with a population of 1,200, located 50 miles northeast of Evansville. The filmmakers theorized that audiences would care more about the fate of an actual town, rather than a fictional locale. Huntingburg was selected after a widespread search, largely because it offered quaint old buildings set along peaceful, narrow streets.

The curious thing is that although the entire film occurs in Huntingburg, only a few scenes were shot there. Salomon reveals, "We did just five days of location work in Indiana, partly for the credit sequence." This remarkable four-minute opening smoothly combines miniature photography, helicopter footage and an extensive overhead tracking shot. The sequence begins with the Paramount Pictures mountain logo, travels down to a river and over a 100', 1/3-scale model dam, continues over action of flooding roads and fleeing residents, and ends in a 2,000' cable ride as a Cablecam — equipped with a Wescam — heads down Main Street and moves into a close-up of actor Randy Quaid.

Opposite page: Tom (Christian Slater), an armored-car guard, and Jim, a professional thief (Morgan Freeman) struggle against the rising waters. Below: Salomon (seated) traverses a set in a small boat.



Almost two-thirds of Huntingburg's population answered the call for extras. The intersection of Main Street and Interstate 231 was blocked off and flooded for some

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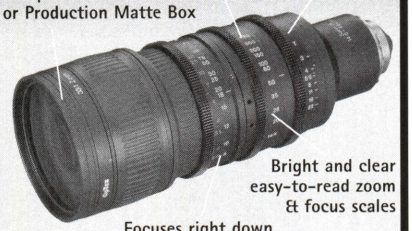
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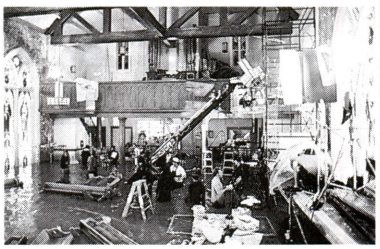
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exterior scenes, and the very last shot in the picture is a helicopter shot made in Indiana.

However, most of the filming took place in a replica of the town constructed on a five-acre stage in Building 703, a cavernous hangar at Rockwell International Airport near Palmdale, California. The facility offered a 100' ceiling with a clearance of 75'. Four 20-ton cranes — once used to haul B-1 bomber aircraft components — hung from the infrastructure. These cranes were invaluable for the hauling, raising and lowering of sets, trees and heavy equipment, as well as for holding the rainmaking rigs. This would not have been possible using Condors deployed around the perimeter of the stage, because they could not have extended over the center of the space.

"We had a tank built which was 680' x 250', and 4' deep," Salomon says. "Around that was a backing which was 2,200' long and 72' high — the biggest backing ever built. We had 40' water dumpsters for the scenes where boats and vehicles were smashed by raging waters. We built numerous sets in the tank — about 50 buildings, including a school, a church, a sheriff's station, a cemetery, and different areas of the town."



A remote arm hovers above a flooded church set as the crew prepares to shoot.

During the course of *Hard Rain*, the water rises from 2" to 16'; instead of altering the actual water level, the production opted for the safer, less time-consuming tactic of lowering the sets into the liquid surface, which remained at a fixed 4' level. Salomon explains, "There were no bases on the buildings; using the ceiling cranes, we lowered the facades so it would look as if the water had risen. When there was supposed to be only three inches of water, we had platforms for trucks to drive on."

The buildings and large props were attached to wire-mesh support footing to keep them solidly anchored in the tank when water was pumped in. The big rain bars kept up an incessant downpour which, in the wider scenes, amounted to as much as 45,000 gallons per minute. "We built the tank so that the water always spilled over to create a horizon," Salomon recalls. "Our rain effects covered the whole 650' x 250' area. Our special effects supervisor, John Frazier, designed the tank and rain rigs. It was a dangerous shoot because the whole thing combined electricity and water! But our gaffer, Dwight Campbell, and I had worked together on *The Abyss*, so he knew all the problems [associated with wet-for-wet photography.]



Tom barrels through a flooded passageway.

"We duplicated Huntingburg's Main Street in the tank, reducing it by about 10 percent, but otherwise we were very true to what the real town looked like. Since it's very hard to build sets in water, we built sets on top of sets. That way, when we had shot one set, we could lift it out and expose a new set behind it. It was designed like a Pandora's Box. We started with the tank crowded with sets, and the last thing we did was the cemetery, which simply consisted of trees and tombstones."

In a hangar adjacent to

John Le Blanc on his favorite prime: the Angenieux 17-102.

Director/cameraman John Le Blanc is shooting a Mazda spot on a set in Chicago. On the front of the 535 is the zoom Le Blanc likes to call his "case of primes"—the Angenieux 17-102 T2.9.

Le Blanc and crew have been meticulously lighting and framing a shot that places Chicago Bull Scottie Pippen in the foreground with the car behind him. He arrives to take the place of his stand-in and—yikes—Pippen is at least 4" taller! With the 17-102 in place, though, there's no need to move the camera to reframe the shot. Le Blanc simply zooms to the exact focal length he needs.

Allows More Time to Light.

"I learned how to light from the Europeans—Vilmos and Laszlo," Le Blanc explains. "And that approach takes a little longer. The 17-102 buys me extra time to light, because I'm not moving the camera or changing primes repeatedly. For the Mazda shoot we had Scottie Pippen for only twelve hours and had three spots to do. The 6X17 helped me get the job done."

Maximum Flexibility.

"The Angenieux 17-102 replaces a case of primes as my primary optical tool. I save time by dialing in the focal length I want instead of waiting while it's found in a box, uncapped and mounted. And I don't have to choose between an 18 and a 24. I also have the 19, the 23 and everything in between."

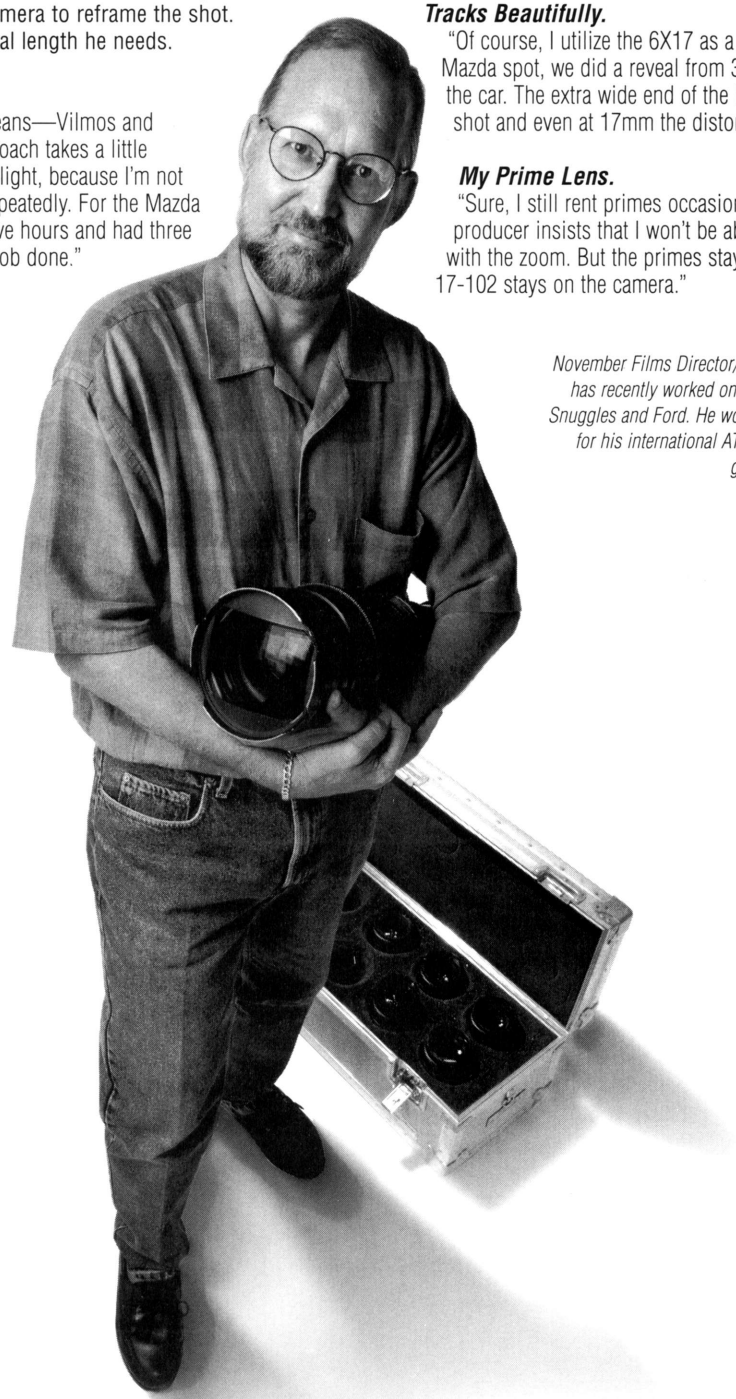
Tracks Beautifully.

"Of course, I utilize the 6X17 as a zoom, as well. For the Mazda spot, we did a reveal from 35 to 17mm—inside the car. The extra wide end of the lens was crucial to the shot and even at 17mm the distortion was minimal."

My Prime Lens.

"Sure, I still rent primes occasionally—when the producer insists that I won't be able to shoot everything with the zoom. But the primes stay in the box, while the 17-102 stays on the camera."

November Films Director/Cameraman John Le Blanc has recently worked on spots for Mercedes, BMW, Snuggles and Ford. He won a Golden Lion at Cannes for his international AT&T campaign and has also garnered four Omni Awards.



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Wet and Wild

Jim and his criminal cronies get down to business.



Building 703 was a tank 30' deep and 40' in diameter, used for a scene in which Christian Slater is trapped in a jail cell and the waters rise perilously around him. Salomon explains that "the whole set was on a platform that we could lower down on a crane to make it look as though the water was rising. For take two, we lifted it out of the water and started over."

Production designer Michael Riva (*The Color Purple*, *Lethal Weapon*, *A Few Good Men*) worked closely with the Salomon and Menzies while planning the film's unique sets. "It reminded us of the old days of moviemaking, when filmmakers could totally created their own universes," Salomon says. "Everything was handmade, and the lighting was created [artificially]. It's not like going out into the streets and shooting. When the lights are out in the town and it's overcast, what's your lighting source? We used sodium-vapor lights like those you find in streetlights, which gave us a lot of yellow lighting. We thought about using a Musco, but it would have been too big for the space we were in. A Mini-Musco would have been all right, but that unit has a generator with it, and we couldn't have a generator in the water. We used a lot of Condors and Dino lights. Unavoidably, we lost many cameras in the drink. We'd fish them out, send them over to Panavision, and they'd get them back to us the next day.

"This was not an easy show, though, believe me!" Salomon



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admits with a grin. "Principal photography took place over 82 days. We started shooting on August 26 of 1996 and wrapped on January 9, 1997; the last day was 22 hours. We spent a long time in that tank and never saw daylight. We'd go in when it was still dark outside and leave for the day when it was dark. It made me feel like a mole.

"This isn't really a disaster movie," Salomon emphasizes. "It has some great characters, people you care about. The flood is more of a backdrop to what's going on. For me it was all about story and character, and that's what I concentrated on. I was on this show from November of 1995, more than a year and a half. We worked on the script for about a year, and made a lot of drafts. Too often, I've seen situations where someone goes lightly over part of the script because they think they can fix it eventually. *It never gets fixed.* There's never time once you start shooting; it's like laying track in front of a train. And when you start improvising too much, you start losing the picture.

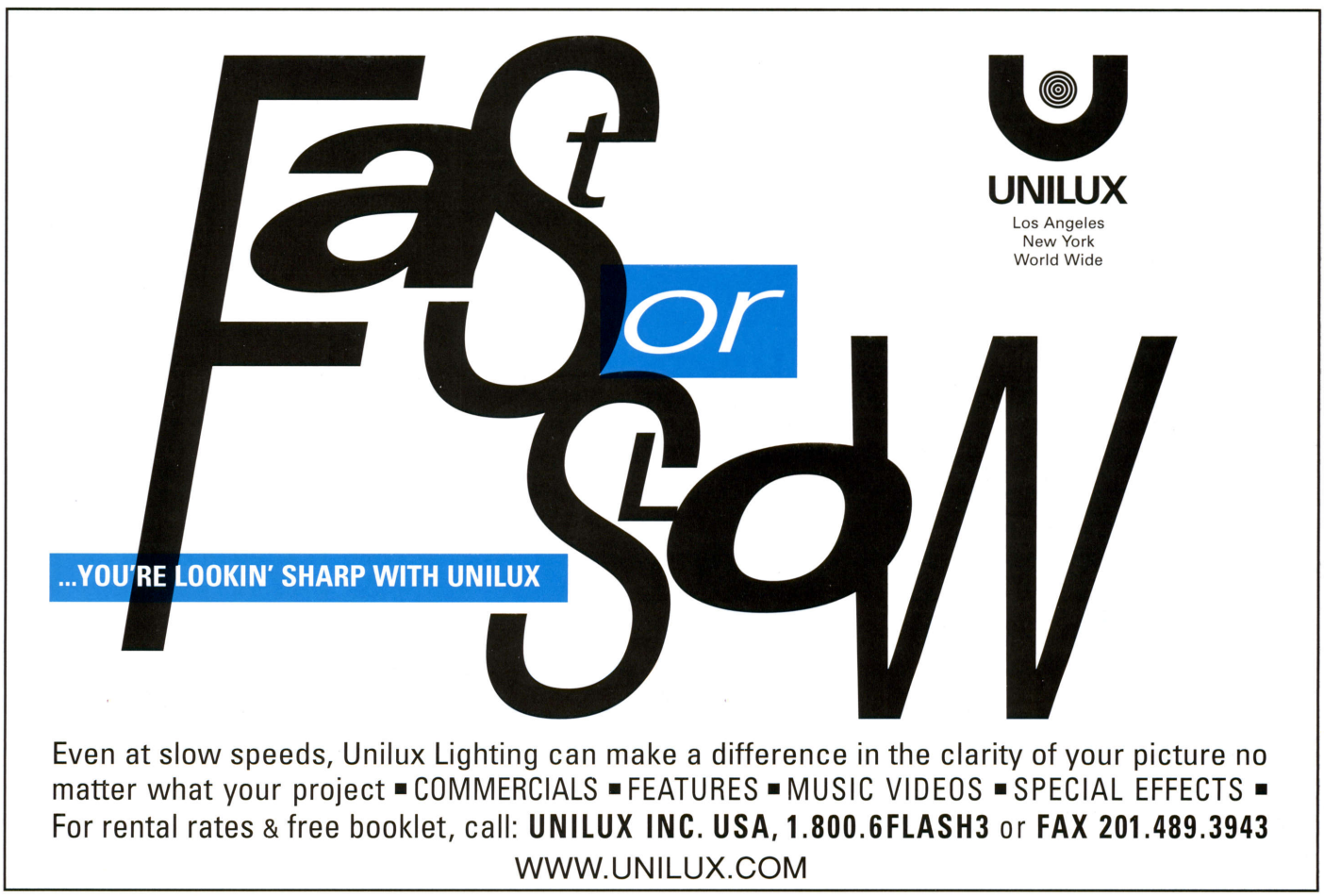
"The studio was wondering how many weeks over schedule we would go — at the time, *Waterworld* was a big embarrassment because it went so far over, and *The Abyss* had gone over. Every show connected with water has run long, so it was important to convince the studio that we could do it."

Salomon grimaces as he remembers one dilemma he managed to avoid. "The movie was originally going to be shot on a lake at night. You can imagine being in a lake with no control and no idea where people are in the dark. In such a situation, by the time you get ready for a shot, the sun starts coming up. We needed a controlled environment, so we created one."

The director was grateful to have some up-to-date equipment that made the work a much easier. One was Louma-L.A.'s Technocrane. "The Technocrane does what a normal crane is supposed to do, but it also extends and retracts," Salomon says. "Andy Romanoff and the Louma technicians were very concerned; they'd never even used it in rain, but they waterproofed it and it performed flawlessly. Instead of having to try to make dolly moves in the water, we had our special effects department build a platform for the Technocrane. The platform was on jacks, so we could roll it around in the water and then just jack it down when we found the right spot for it.

"We also found a smaller Cablecam that was remote-controlled, which allowed us to do dolly shots over the water without having any wake. That was new, and had never been used before.

"Also, Howard Preston [of Preston Cinema Services] has an autofocus device called the Light Ranger, which we used," Salomon



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Wet and Wild

adds. "One of the problems of shooting in water is that you can't set marks down for the actors. But if you keep the Light Ranger's viewfinder crosshairs on the subject, such as a person moving around, it will focus the camera automatically. We made shots at 96 fps with a wide-open 300mm lens, and they came out razor-sharp. However, the Light Ranger didn't always work if there was too much rain, because a laser measures distance and the drops could sometimes interfere with the beam.

"In addition, we did a lot of our lighting with big helium lighting balloons. We could move them around easily and get beautiful, soft light. They saved us a great deal of time."

Computer-generated imaging was sometimes necessary to complete *Hard Rain*'s sodden milieu. According to Salomon, "We built the town's church full-scale, but we didn't have room for the steeple, so we added it in post using a CGI 3-D model. Cinesite did it for us, and I'm very impressed with their work. In some shots we'd see the ceiling, so we've composited skies in with clouds coming across and lightning flashing, and it looks real. We only did one motion-control shot; for everything else, they just tracked the shot afterwards."

Asked to assess the relative merits of being a director rather than a cinematographer, Salomon offers, "I loved being a cinematographer, and I still think the director of photography and the operator have the best jobs on the set. But I shot my first film as a director of photography when I was 20, and I worked in that capacity for many years. I just wanted something else in my life. I like directing; it's nice to be in control of the whole process." ■

Honoring the Memory of 4 Little Girls

Director Spike Lee enlists cinematographer Ellen Kuras to help him explore a pivotal event in the history of the Civil Rights Movement.

by Eric Rudolph

Photography by David Lee

People are so hypnotized by the images in documentaries because they are so often shot in the same standardized way," says cinematographer Ellen Kuras *(I Shot Andy Warhol,* profiled in *AC* April, 1996; *Unzipped, Postcards from America).* "For *4 Little Girls,* Spike Lee and I decided to try to shake things up."

Swing-and-tilt lenses, reversal stock, cross-processing, Super 8, and tinting are among the tools the duo used to enliven the traditional mix of interviews, archival footage and still photographs. The result is a strikingly unconventional-looking nonfiction film that packs a visual as well as an emotional knockout punch.

4 Little Girls is the first feature-length documentary by Lee, who has established his credentials with such pictures as *Do the Right Thing, Malcolm X* (see *AC* Nov. '92) and *Get on the Bus* (*AC* Nov. '96). *Girls* tells the horrifying and heart-wrenching story of the September 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, during which four young African-American girls were killed while attending Sunday school. The film focuses upon both the girls' relatively happy, normal lives with their families and friends, and the ironic results of the bombing, which backfired on the terrorists by galvanizing America's nascent Civil Rights Movement.

This retelling of a terrible chapter from our nation's all-too-recent past had its genesis in more contemporary acts of racial violence. Recalls Kuras, "Spike and I were talking about the recent rash of church burnings, and he said he wanted to do a film about the 1963 Birmingham church bombing. We set out to do a very emotional documentary which tells a story that not a whole lot of people know much about. Most people, including myself, were unaware of the intensely energizing impact this event had on the Civil Rights Movement."



Photos courtesy of 40 Acres and A Mule Filmworks.

Alpha Robertson recounts happier times as she displays a snapshot of her daughter Carole, a victim of the 1963 racially-motivated Alabama church bombing chronicled in *4 Little Girls.*

4 Little Girls

Lee says that selecting Kuras as his director of photography was an easy choice to make. "I value Ellen's creativity," the director offers. "I like her sensibility and approach to her work. We get along well, and have similar tastes. Ellen presented me with a variety of ways to photograph these nonfiction elements, and I tried to be open to her input."

Kuras adds, "The unusual look of *4 Little Girls* emerged from our desire to make the events as real as possible. We wanted to tell the story of the political situation in a way that would bring it back home again and put it in people's faces, to show that something that happened a long time ago is still very much alive, certainly in the African-American community."

Kuras was well-suited to the task, having come to filmmaking through her anthropology studies at Brown University. "I became interested in still photography in my second year, and went on to study the theory of film. I became involved in documentaries because it was a natural progression from my interest in anthropology. After several years as production assistant, associate producer and assistant cameraperson on different documentaries, I got the opportunity in 1985 to be director of photography on the documentary *Samsara,* which was shot in Cambodia."



A commemorative plaque honoring the lives of the girls killed in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing.

The cinematographer then shot her first narrative film: Tom Kalin's *Swoon,* a visually unconventional feature based on the infamous Leopold and Loeb murder case. Kuras' striking black-and-white photography earned her the 1992 Sundance Film Festival's Best Feature Cinematography Award. She won the same award in 1995 for her work on Rebecca Miller's *Angela.*

Kuras' imagery in the more varied world of fictional features appears to have influenced her documentary style. One of the key ways in which *4 Little Girls* differs from other documentaries is its highly unorthodox approach to the still photographic material and other two-dimensional elements, such as documents and newspaper articles. "I've shot so many images of still photographs over the years that I wanted to find a way to re-introduce and re-interpret that material," explains Kuras. Thus, in *4 Little Girls,* stills are photographed with selective, dramatic lighting and focus, rapid zooms, extreme angles, jump cuts and a "shaky-cam" approach. The stills occasionally slide into the frame like snapshots tossed onto a table, and have their own color palette.

A variety of alternative approaches were used on all of the still and document shots, Kuras explains. "We used swing-and-tilt lenses to selectively focus on certain parts of the images to enhance the narrative. When we shot news clippings, we would sometimes start sharp on the first couple of lines of the article and then rack from soft focus to sharp focus for the headline. We did this so the viewer would first get an idea of what the article was about and then get rolled into the impact of the headline, which states the facts in a few bold words. We thought this was more effective than having viewers just read a series of headlines.

"With photos and some of the documents, such as the death certificates, we would rack-focus to the date of the bombing or the cause of death to give a more emotional feel to the image. We were constantly looking for those sorts of opportunities in the pictures and documents."

Selective lighting was also used on stills to direct the viewer's attention. "It is much more interesting to take a still photo and further interpret it with light, highlighting the key parts of the image and letting the rest fall into shadow," Kuras maintains. "I used Dedo lights, because they are small and can be focused, to direct the viewer's attention to specific parts of an image."

But the circumstances under which much of the material had to be shot might have led other filmmakers to simply photograph the material in a rather straightforward manner. Lee explains, "A great deal of the still photo material was in the collection of the Birmingham Library and could not be taken off-premises, so we had to set up lights in the library and shoot it right there."

Luckily, the photography of these stills occurred toward the end of the shooting schedule. Kuras recalls, "We shot the stills after we'd done most of the interviews, heard the stories and seen Birmingham. I was therefore better able to approach the photos and documents; I knew why I was shooting this material. I also had a great deal of input from Spike. He communicated to me how each document or still should be photographed, and which parts should be emphasized and de-emphasized, so I had a good idea about how to proceed."

The cinematographer's A-camera was an Arriflex 16SR-3 Highspeed fitted with a Super 16 gate. The crew carried a complete set of Zeiss close-focus prime lenses in 16mm, 24mm and 32mm lengths, as well as a 10-100mm Zeiss T2.2 zoom, a Canon 8-64mm T2.5 zoom and a set of SwingShift lenses, which are built by Century Precision Optics.



On location in Alabama, Spike Lee and Ellen Kuras conduct an interview with David Vann, who was mayor of Birmingham at the time of the tragic incident.

Another interesting tool Kuras used while shooting flat art was a spring-wound Bolex 16mm camera. She expounds, "I found myself trying to lengthen the duration of the flash-frames by overcranking, up to 64 fps on the Bolex and 120 fps on the Arri Highspeed, so the flash-frames would bleed into the image. I wanted to use that unique filmic quality that a flash-frame produces for transitions."

Kuras also employed a variety of film stocks. "We shot 7250 reversal film with the Bolex and cross-processed it as negative to add a grainy, gritty feel. Cross-processing reversal film enhances the grain and lends a more saturated feel to the colors. The resulting negative doesn't have the purity of true negative film; cross-processed reversal film looks more like a color Xerox. Spike likes to use reversal stock; it's almost like a trademark of his." In *Clockers (AC* Sept. '95) Lee used cross-processed 5239 to convey the gritty feel of daily life in a Brooklyn housing project, while in the Million Man March drama *Get on the Bus*, overexposed 7239 (pushed one stop) signified moments when a crisis forced the bus passengers to unite.

"On most other documentaries with emotional material, I've always been able to keep a distance because of the camera. On *4 Little Girls*, I was overwhelmed."
— Ellen Kuras

Super 8 Kodachrome 40 stock was also used for art and B-roll segments. The Super 8 was shot with a Canon 1014 XLS camera and then blown up directly to 35mm.

While the director and cinematographer paid a great deal of attention to their work with the stills, they handled the archival footage in a more traditional manner during postproduction. "A lot of the footage was in pretty dicey shape to begin with, so we didn't feel we would gain much by shooting it off of monitors or screens," says Kuras.

However, Kuras feels that editor Sam Pollard's selection of footage — particularly scenes in which fire hoses were turned on marchers — added impact to the film. "The graphic quality of some of the archival images was haunting," the cinematographer says. "The news photographers captured a certain feeling of the events, and our editor skillfully selected the most effective footage."

The cinematographer chose to emphasize certain hues in postproduction to enhance the emotional tug of the archival material. "I wanted to separate the emotions with color, so I decided that all of the images of violence — such as the attack dogs, fire hoses and hangings — would be blue-tinted, high-contrast black-and-white. I felt that the

4 Little Girls

violent scenes should have a feel that would contrast with the footage of the families and their personal stories, which we timed to be warmer, with a slight sepia tint. The marches also received a blue tint, but I brought in more of the mid-tones to make that material stand out against the hard look of the higher-contrast violence footage."

Kuras was somewhat leery of taking the sepia timing too far. "I wanted to make a distinction in the color palette so the viewer would feel a shift. But I knew I had to be careful with using sepia, because it tends to be associated with a romanticized archival look, and this is definitely not a romantic story."



Coretta Scott King, the widow of late Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr., recalls how the terrorist attack actually fueled further political activism.

Filtration was kept to a minimum because the film, shot mostly in Super 16, would be blown-up to 35mm. "I used low-contrast filters on the interviews, but I was wary about doing more than that because of the blow-up," Kuras relates. "I didn't want to use a Tiffen ProMist, because that would have taken away from the apparent sharpness. I kept it simple, staying with color correction and Tiffen's Ultra Contrast filter series.

"In general, I tend to use low-contrast filters because I like to to make the image smoother and take away the edginess that Kodak film has. The look of their stocks is bright and very crispy, almost too sharp, and I try to smooth it out. I ended up using a half Ultra Contrast through a Number 1, sometimes a Number 2, on exteriors."

For atmospheric effects, though, such as one scene that evokes the feel of the old South via images of a train and railroad tracks, additional filtration was used. "I used the SwingShift lenses and a very heavy tobacco filter, a Number 4 or 5, for the train scene; I wanted crushed blacks and a more monochromatic feeling to give it a heaviness," the cinematographer explains.

Kuras utilized an unusual lighting approach while filming the talking-head interviews with the girls' family members and friends. "I wanted the interviews to be a little bit edgy," she submits. "I wanted theatricality and intimacy. In the beginning, I carried two 1200-watt HMIs, a Par and a Fresnel, along with Chinese lanterns and several Chimeras, but in the end we kept going for a simpler approach because our interview subjects often had only a few minutes to give us, especially the more famous people. We would have to go wherever they could see us and set up very quickly. That's the way it always is with documentaries."

Matters were even more sensitive while filming interviews with the parents of Denise McNair, one of the four murdered girls. "They were the first people we interviewed, and it was a struggle," Kuras concedes. "I would probably reshoot their interviews differently today. We didn't have much setup time, and it was so emotional. If I could do it over again, I would make Maxine McNair's lighting much more intimate, to match the wrenching power of her words. When we shot that footage, I was still trying to figure out the look [of the film]."

From that point onwards, Lee and Kuras broke with yet another strong documentary tradition. Kuras relates, "After the McNair interviews, I decided to take the interview segments out of the context as much as possible. I was searching for a way to shoot that would not be a cliché; I didn't want to present the subjects in a typical setting that would define their personality or profession, but I also didn't want them in limbo against black. The point was to help the audience focus more on what the people were saying than on the circumstances surrounding them."

Practical considerations forced Kuras to work with smaller fixtures than usual. "I normally use bigger lights with a lot of diffusion, but we were in people's houses, and we had to be able to plug into the wall. That was a limiting factor. The 1200-watt light heads were also large and somewhat intimidating to our subjects, so I moved on to a small Chimera with a 500-watt bulb, or a medium Chimera with a 1000-watt Tota-light, and then finally to Kino Flos."

When Lee and Kuras decided that the interviews should all be shot in tight close-ups, the Kino Flos proved their worth. Lee notes, "We felt that the subject matter demanded intimacy, so we decided to let the interviewees' faces take up the whole frame."

The closely-placed Kino Flos proved to be a key to maintaining the film's quality look. Kuras explains, "The fact that we moved in for tight close-ups allowed me to use the cool Kino Flos closer to the subjects' faces, which helped me to get a decent stop. I didn't want to use high-speed stock

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4 Little Girls

because of the grain; I knew the film would be blown up. I used a lot of 7293 and was trying to use as much 7245 as possible, because I like the saturation and fine grain. I didn't have time to do much testing, so we exposed and processed normally."

The experience of reliving this pivotal event in our country's history proved a moving one for the cinematographer, who was an outsider due both to her race and upbringing. "I entered into this world of the South as a Northerner; Spike also allowed me to enter a world that is entirely African-American. It moved me that he was so open and trusting and confident that I could handle the situation and have a certain respect. When he introduced me to the members of the 16th Street Baptist Church and everyone accepted me with open arms, it blew me away."

Likewise, Kuras was surprised at how deeply the stories she filmed affected her. "On most other documentaries with emotional material, I've always been able to keep a distance because of the camera. On *4 Little Girls,* I was overwhelmed, especially during the interviews with the parents. It was just so emotional; we were all sobbing after Maxine McNair's interview. What those parents went through was such a universal experience; it could have happened to anyone, black or white. Those little girls could have been our loved ones, and we were unified by that."

Though Kuras is being tapped for more and more feature work, she notes that non-fiction moviemaking will always be a part of her work. "One of things that's striking about documentary filmmaking is that it keeps you real as a person; it makes you question your own reality. You're constantly asking yourself, 'How does this relate to me?' After doing a film like this, you tend to look at yourself rather closely in the mirror." ■

A Midwife's Tale, Now and Then

A unique docudrama explores the realities of 18th-century life, as seen through the eyes of a singular working woman.

by Brooke Comer

Photography by Susan Meiselas and Glen D. Ross

Boston-based producer Laurie Kahn-Leavitt is something of a history buff. Even before she optioned the book *A Midwife's Tale* and made her drama/documentary of the same name, Kahn-Leavitt envisioned a project that delved into America's pre-photographic Colonial era. "Obviously, U.S. history doesn't begin with the invention of the camera," says the producer, who works under the banner of Blueberry Hill Productions. "However, I discovered that there was very little to work with in the period before 1840, except for portraits of the aristocracy. Predictably, most of the records I came across had been written by the founding fathers."



The diary of 18th-century midwife Martha Ballard (Kaiulani Lee) provided the Boston-based filmmakers with a fascinating glimpse into everyday life during America's Colonial era.

While pondering a cinematic examination of this era, Kahn-Leavitt read diaries, letters and journals from early American history, and thought about how to edit them and mount a minimally staged performance. "I really wanted to get back into the lives of the people who are normally invisible when you look into the past — the everyday folk who are often omitted from history books," she says.

During her search for suitable material, Kahn-Leavitt found a copy of *The New York Times Book Review* which offered a critique on historian Laurel Ulrich's work *A Midwife's Tale*. "I was astounded," she recalls. "Here was a diary written by Martha Ballard, an 18th-century midwife and healer on the Maine frontier, who had chronicled every day of her



Photos courtesy of Blueberry Hill Productions.

A Midwife's Tale

life for 27 years."

The producer was completely absorbed by Ballard's account, which gave her entree into the unique social system that had existed from 1785 until 1812, the year of the diarist's death. Kahn-Leavitt optioned Ulrich's book and began planning ways to make Martha Ballard's world emerge onscreen with the same cryptic force that came across so powerfully in print; she also sought to weave these 18th-century interludes together with scenes of Ulrich researching that era. The result of her efforts is a fascinating and educational slice-of-life film that will have a January 19 broadcast premiere on the PBS series *The American Experience.*



Above: The crew prepares to film a sequence in which Ballard paddles off in a canoe to reach a patient. This scene was one of many shot at King's Landing, an historical settlement in New Brunswick, Canada.

In bringing this project to fruition, the producer faced some formidable challenges. The production's tight budget was an issue throughout the filmmaking process. Although Kahn-Leavitt did benefit from some corporate largesse (Eastman Kodak donated some EXR 7293 film stock to the production), she generally faced an uphill battle in her attempt to get maximum production values on the screen. She concedes that she broke every rule that normally applies to first-time filmmakers. "They say you should stick to a limited place and time, and never do a period piece. But I went back 200 years, spanned 27 years and four seasons. It was a valuable lesson for me as a documentary filmmaker. Creating the world you are shooting as a dramatic filmmaker is quite different from shooting an existing world as a documentary filmmaker."

Kahn-Leavitt was fortunate to find a director, Richard Rogers, who shared her zeal. Mutual friends in the Boston film world introduced the pair. Kahn-Leavitt was particularly impressed by two films Rogers had done for the PBS series *Voices and Visions of American Poets* — one on William Carlos Williams and another on Wallace Stevens. "Those films interweave documentary and drama and even animation with imagination and beauty," Kahn-Leavitt says. "From my first meeting with Dick, we say eye-to-eye on how we wanted to make *A Midwife's Tale.*"

Rogers comes from a background in experimental film. After graduating from Harvard University and London's Royal College of Art, he tried his hand as a commercial still photography. As he recalls, however, "I wasn't any good at it. I rolled over backwards trying to do what the client wanted, and I couldn't develop a style." He later made films for *Voices and Visions,* and did a stint in Hollywood on episodic television shows. "That's where I learned about working with actors," he notes.

The director then headed for South America, where he made several films about the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. *Pictures from a Revolution,* a documentary that Rogers shot and co-directed, made its debut at the New York Film Festival.

Prior to the actual shooting of *A Midwife's Tale,* Rogers and Kahn-Leavitt formed a workshop and recruited local stage actors to act out segments of the film in a Massachusetts barn. Rogers, who is also a cinematographer, filmed the experimental scenes on Hi-8 video before any scenes were shot on 16mm, which kept the filmmakers from making expensive mistakes later on. Kahn-Leavitt rewrote scenes as the workshop progressed. She notes, "We learned a lot by letting the actors improvise, so we could experience how the performances would come across onscreen."

Rogers notes that he has always had a keen interest in shooting interiors without much artificial light. In planning the lighting style for *A Midwife's Tale,* Rogers had extensive discussions with the two cinematographers who would shoot different parts of the film: Steven Poster, ASC, and Peter Stein.

Poster (*Someone to Watch Over Me, Rocky V, Opportunity Knocks* and the Cable ACE-nominated *Roswell*) was originally hired to serve as sole director of photography, and shot documentary footage and a few dramatic scenes which appeared in the sample reel used to raise the



project some additional funding. By the time capital was secured, however, he had been hired to shoot another project, so Stein came on board. The latter's resumé includes the features *Missing Pieces*, *After the Rain*, and *Reuben, Reuben,* as well as the Emmy-nominated television movies *Don't Touch* and *Robbers, Rooftops and Witches.* "Steven and Peter are both very talented people who are used to making multimillion-dollar movies," says Rogers. "What appealed to them about working on *Midwife's Tale* was the fact that they didn't have a lot of tools and technology to play with; it was like going back to film school and finding out what you can do with nothing, when you crinkle up a roll of foil and shine flashlights off mirrors. Sometimes the only light they had was a simple wick candle. I've done a lot of shooting in rural areas with my Aaton and a crew of two or three, where all of the light sources consisted of either candles, fire or sun. In situations like that, you try to shoot at magic hour, or you shoot to the light; you don't light to the shoot. I think both Steven and Peter found that experience to be liberating and challenging."

Indeed, Poster jumped at the chance to work on the small but intriguing project. He was in the midst of shooting a Burger King spot when the ad's production designer told him he was heading off to do a period piece. Poster expressed an interest in shooting it, and sent out a reel which duly impressed Kahn-Leavitt and Rogers. They told the cinematographer that they couldn't afford his usual top-of-the-line price tag, but Poster offered to work within their budget. "I really liked the project, and when I met with Dick we really hit it off," Poster says. "To me, it was very exciting to do this small, 16mm film. I like having the opportunity to do good, quality films; it's real art."



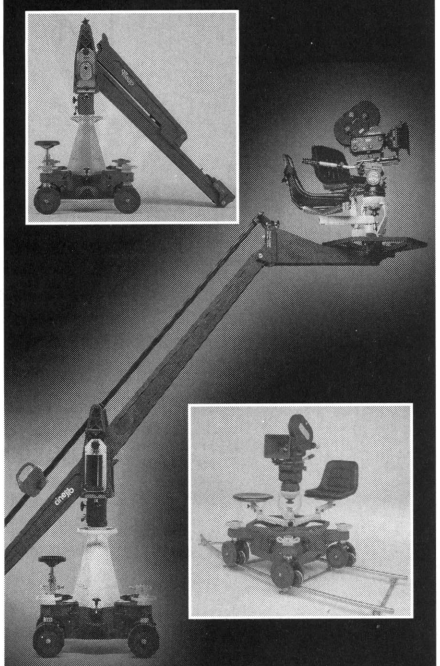


Above and left: Cinematographers Peter Stein and Steven Poster, ASC used low-key source lighting to infuse the film with an authentic period atmosphere.

Stein was equally enamored of the project. "This is one of the films I'm most proud to have worked on," he says. "It's a project filled with integrity. Most biographies and journals from the Colonial era were written by men; people back then thought that women had little or nothing to contribute to society. But this woman, Martha Ballard, was a midwife who never lost a mother in 30 years, which was incredible for that time. She also had a huge influence on the development of her town and the people who lived there. This film goes far beyond the women's movement in terms of Martha's contribution to her world. I knew right away that it was a project I wanted to work on."

Rogers had in-depth discussions with both Poster and Stein about lighting for a period look. Says the director, "For me, the whole issue was not to make a romantic vision, but something natural, with a respect for the existing light, which consisted mostly of firelight, a few candles, and whatever light came into the settings from outside."

The director also talked to both cinematographers about tailor-

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A Midwife's Tale

ing the camera's movement to the specific requirements of the show. "My general idea was to have the film start off as a documentary that observed the actual historian, Laurel Ulrich, going about her work," he says. Rogers and Poster filmed these scenes using the director's trusty Aaton; Poster added continuous but very slow dolly and zoom moves, lending the sequences a more dynamic feel than static shots would have allowed.

Later in the film, as the historian's knowledge and understanding of Martha Ballard's world expands, "the camera movement becomes more like that of a contemporary fictional film," says Rogers, who had planned to change the style of camera movement in a very orderly way as the film progressed, with handheld shots gradually giving way to dolly moves. "We used the dolly more and more as Martha got older; everything slowed down and became more solid. She's no longer on her horse; she's in chairs, and she moves slowly. That idea seemed perfect when I planned it, but it all went to hell in a handbag when we started assembling the film in the editing room," he admits. "Those types of [photographic plans] have a way of becoming tedious and stupid when you actually put the film together. So while the pattern is there, it's not as consistent as it was in my original vision."

Stein says that he was intrigued by Rogers' choice to shoot a lot of handheld scenes. Handheld shooting has always held an appeal for the cinematographer; in fact, this is one of the reasons he returned to documentary filmmaking after establishing himself as a successful feature cinematographer. "Even when I was on a feature and had operators, I always did the handheld segments myself," he says. "You need a sixth sense to be able to follow a scene as it unfolds, to let one action take you to the next action.

"You don't see a lot of handheld in period films," he adds. "There were scenes where Dick would set up and an actor would rehearse a number of times, and I'd work as if I were shooting from a pure documentary perspective. I'd start in one position, and by the time we finished I'd be standing someplace else, as if it were happening live. I'd let the action take me from one part of a room to another, which was something I'd never done before."

The filmmakers' work on the project benefited from authentic settings that lent greatly to the story's period ambience. Kahn-Leavitt considers herself fortunate to have found an ideal location for the bulk of the film. "We scouted Maine, New York, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to find a place with a functional 18th-century sawmill with outbuildings, a river, woods and fields, but there were no locations which met all of these requirements," she recalls. The producer soon heard some promising things about the King's Landing Historical Settlement in New Brunswick, Canada, an 18th-century village in the Prince William area. "Going to King's Landing was like stepping onto a $30 million dollar set," Kahn-Leavitt recalls. "It gave our production designer, Nancy Deren, a huge head start."

She adds that Deren demonstrated considerable imagination and discipline in achieving the look the project required without spending large sums of money. The designer scoured yard sales and antique shops for realistic-looking props; when she found an item the production company couldn't afford to buy, she was either fashioned a replica herself or borrowed actual props from King's Landing.

Deren's efforts proved particularly valuable during filming of the production's initial scenes, which were shot at historic Richmond Town on Staten Island. "For financial reasons, I needed to be within an hour's radius of New York or

Boston," Kahn-Leavitt says. "We only had three buildings to work in there, but Nancy made them look like six or seven different houses."

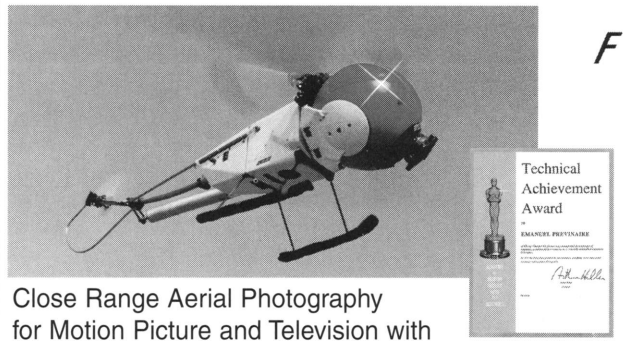
The first scene of the production, filmed on Staten Island and shot by Poster, involved an epidemic in the sweltering summer of 1787. It sounds straightforward enough, except for the fact that the filmmakers had to shoot the sequence in frigid December weather. "This segment of the film is where most of the intertwining of past and present takes place," says Kahn-Leavitt. "But Staten Island was freezing, and the actors were wearing summer clothes; we had to spray them with fake sweat, which made them even colder. We wrapped them in blankets as soon as they came off the set."

It was Poster's job to transform the chilly December location into a summer heat wave. "Most of the light sources for our day interior scenes came from windows, and there weren't many windows in those houses," he notes. "This afforded us the opportunity to be very directional with the light."

The cinematographer used HMI Pars equipped with 1/2 to full Rosco straw gels to create a hot, sunny look for daytime scenes. Night lighting was somewhat easier, since Poster's candlelight and firelight sources already glowed with warmth.

The cinematographer's camera of choice was an Arri SR-2, which represented a return to his filmmaking roots. "I've shot a lot of 16mm in my life, but I hadn't shot that way for a long time, and I wasn't familiar with the newer 16mm film stocks," he says. A few scenes were shot with Kodak's EXR 7293, but most of the film was recorded on 7287, which Kodak has since discontinued, improved, and reintroduced as Vision 320T 7277. Poster found that the 16mm stocks allowed him "pretty much the same control that I'm accustomed to with 35mm film, except that the image grainier because of the optics and the size of

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A Midwife's Tale

the negative."

Rogers, who also paid close attention to the stocks' performance, appreciated the 87's lower-contrast look, "which gave the film a certain mood," as well as the emulsion's great range in shadow areas. "That characteristic of the stock helped us a lot. The interiors we used were very dark, and we wanted all of the light to come from the windows, so we were using very little fill."

Poster felt that it was best not to use too much filtration, but he did occasionally use a Tiffen White Pro Mist, "mostly for the historical scenes and night reproductions." For exteriors, he used his signature polarizer. "I've used one on everything since I was a teenager," he notes. "I love the way it lets you see things that are normally invisible because of the reflective quality of light. It takes the glare off skin, too, and I like the way it works with greens and reds. It allows you to see more into the colors."

When Stein took over at King's Landing, he and the crew faced their own location hurdles. With its 18th-century houses, sawmill, church and farms, King's Landing made for a realistic location, but as Stein notes, "The ceilings were often only seven feet high, and a lot of the night interiors were lit by candlelight, oil lamps or fire. Hanging lamps was complicated by the lowness of the ceilings, which kept us from building a grid. On a normal set, I'd have hung the lights." Instead, he used tiny light fixtures taped to the ceilings or, for daytime scenes, hid HMIs outside the windows so the lighting was motivated from outdoors. Stein used Zeiss Superspeeds in the candlelight, augmented by inkies handheld just out of frame. "We could bring the level of those up or down with a dimmer to simulate candlelight," he says. "I'd have one crew person per actor on a dimmable inky; they'd move with the actors right out of the frame, holding the lights. We also used the dimmers to create a bit of flicker."

The cinematographer shot his portions of *A Midwife's Tale* with both Rogers' Aaton and an Arri SR-2. In addition to the Zeiss Superspeed primes, his array of lenses included a Cooke 9-50mm zoom. "The Cooke was used almost exclusively for interiors," Stein says. "When we shot night exteriors, which was not often, we used primes."

Although Poster is used to working on big-budget projects, he says that he had no problem adjusting to the creatively resourceful, problem-solving methodology that low-budget documentary filmmaking demands. "This was a real money-saving project," says Poster, who later returned to supervise the telecine work. "There were no dailies; the direct-to-tape transfer was done from the negative. We were going to cut on tape and then for timing, just do the tape-to-tape correction to save money and time. But since that approach doesn't allow the same kind of control you'd have if you were doing a final telecine from the negative, it was very important to get close to the look we wanted in the initial film-to-tape transfer."

Luckily for Poster, the piece was short enough so that he could keep track of where he was going with everything in the initial transfer; in the end, there was little need for tape correction. Ultimately, Kahn-Leavitt and Rogers cut the negative and made film prints, as well as an interpositive from which they made their final video for broadcast.

Reflecting upon the project, Rogers says that the atmosphere at King's Landing established the pace for the filmmakers. "Many of the people who work in this village actually live like 18th-century villagers; they cook their food over open fires, and dress the way people did back then. We adopted that pace, and it made our crew very sensitive to these people, who cared so much about every animal and flower." ■

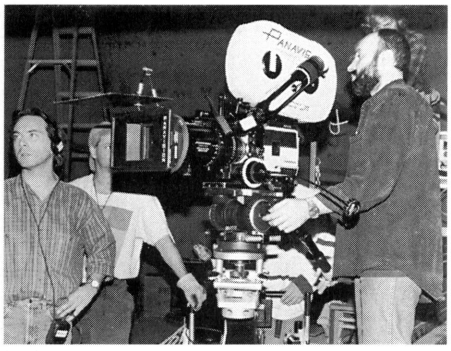
In Defense of "Egoism"

Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life illuminates the author's controversial philosophies.

by Holly Willis



When Michael Paxton decided to make a documentary about the oft-maligned and misunderstood author and philosopher Ayn Rand, he had no idea what kind of task he had set for himself. This graduate of New York University's Film and Television



Above: Director Michael Paxton and Russian cameraman Alik Sakharov prepare to shoot some interview footage. Right: Novelist/philosopher Ayn Rand enjoys a moment of levity, a quite different persona from her popular perception as a grave supporter of conservative individualism.

Photos courtesy of Strand Releasing.

program had co-produced and directed Rand's play *Ideal,* which made its world premiere at Hollywood's Melrose Theater in 1989, and he had adapted and directed a theatrical version of Rand's novella *Anthem* in 1991, but he had never made a documentary. In creating *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life,* he embarked upon what would become a four-year odyssey, with a meager budget and the great expectations which only an abiding love for your subject can produce.

Paxton's interest in Ayn Rand began while he was in high school. "I was really lost," explains Paxton, "and I decided one day to go into a bookstore and see if I could find a book

In Defense of "Egoism"

Right: Rand confers with actor Gary Cooper, who embodied the role of an unconventional, self-sufficient architect in King Vidor's 1949 film version of her novel *The Fountainhead.* Below: The author cavorts with her husband, Frank O'Connor.

that would share the values that I had, but didn't seem to find around me in my family life and in school." He continues, "The world seemed like a crazy place, and I really needed to figure out what existence was about. When I went into the bookstore, I saw the cover of the book *We the Living;* it had a picture of three faces covered by barbed wire, and they looked as if they were stretching toward the sky and trying to get out of this feeling of being fenced in. That was exactly how I felt, so I picked up the book. It basically changed my life."

Paxton went on to peruse Rand's *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* and the rest of her fiction, as well as her nonfiction. He says, "The characters in her novels really spoke to me, and I liked the idea that you could make sense out of life — which, being brought up Catholic, was the opposite of what I had been taught. That's what attracted me to her."



While Paxton was involved in the theatrical production of *Anthem,* he was approached by an investor regarding other projects. Paxton mentioned a documentary on the life of Ayn Rand, whom he felt had not only been critically neglected, but egregiously misunderstood and misrepresented. As a philosophy major in college, for example, Paxton found that Rand, despite her undeniable cultural presence and articulate philosophical writings, was virtually ignored. "You never brought her up in class," says Paxton. "If you did, you



were told not to bring her up, which is bizarre. It's one thing to take someone and say, 'We don't agree with her ideas but let's discuss them,' but no one would even do that, and it seemed very strange to me. And this still holds [with her work] today, although the situation is a bit better. She's taught in colleges now, but it's amazing to me how she is really shut out of literary and intellectual circles."

Rand was born in the Russian city of St. Petersburg in 1905, and emigrated to the United States in 1926. She espoused a particularly strong view of individualism, one that not only reconsidered the motives behind such values as altruism, but ardently supported capitalism. She thus appeals to many readers who seek a sense of identity and a means for understanding objective reality here and now, while alienating readers who find her views conservative and ultimately repressive, especially as they relate to capitalism.

Attempting to explain readers' mixed feelings about Rand, Paxton offers, "I think it's because she's an anathema. We are such a Victorian, repressed, provincial society, and as much as we want to think that as Americans we're free, we're actually very repressed in our minds and spirits. I think she expresses a very clear and extreme point of view; her values are clear across the board. She's also very logical about everything, but that logic springs from her values, and those values are based on being a human being and living here on Earth, not on what will happen to us when we die. That turns a lot of people off — death is a fearful subject to a lot of people, and I think it's hard for them to deal with it in the way that she did, which was at a very practical and surprisingly spiritual level."

Paxton began his Rand documentary in 1994, initially with only a proposal. "My original schedule gave us a year to make the film," he explains. "Since we had nothing when we started but the proposal, I literally had to write the script and the narration while we were doing the research. It was an incredible flux of preproduction, production, and postproduction; while I was writing the narration we were pulling photographs and shooting them, even before I really knew how I was going to use them, and we were scouting for film clips and figuring out the interviews and dramatizations."

Paxton says that he was in actual production for about six weeks. "We shot dramatic scenes and interviews in Los Angeles and New York, and then we started editing those while I continued to research and write. Finally, I recorded the narration with [actress] Sharon Gless; once we had that, I could go in and really structure the whole piece. But it was like this big monster. There was a constant flooding of ideas and things coming in, and we were always wondering where to put it all. Of course, when you go off to do the interviews, you don't know what people will say and how it will change the direction of the film, so I couldn't write the whole script without the interviews. I did have a chronology of her life written down, which helped guide the whole film."

One of the major elements in

Ayn Rand is historical background offered through photographs and various documents that Paxton collected from a variety of sources. Because he had become acquainted with Ayn Rand's estate in his earlier Rand productions, Paxton already knew who to contact for this material. Paxton took the stills to Disney animator Jim Farrel, who shot them on a traditional animation stand, doing various zooms and dissolves in the camera. Paxton, who had served as assistant director on the live action/animated feature *The Pagemaster,* has a working knowledge of animation techniques, and was able to convey to Farrel exactly what he needed. He explains, "I Xeroxed every still we had, took a field guide with a 1.85:1 area, and then drew the different sizes of the shot, or the zoom, as well as the length of time I needed for the shot."

Although Paxton's animation background proved helpful, he still relied on Farrel's expertise. "He's wonderful aesthetically," says Paxton. "Sometimes I would map a photo out but not know exactly what it was going to look like; he'd be able to figure out how to get what I wanted. He was great; I was constantly going in and dropping off this crazy stuff for him, and he worked on this over the course of three years."

The various film clips used by Paxton were another integral part of the documentary, He employed everything from segments of *Mark of Zorro* to interviews with Rand on *The Mike Wallace Show* and *Donahue.* He also used footage of early Hollywood to illustrate Rand's first attempts to become a screenwriter at the DeMille Studios, where she was initiated into film production by DeMille himself on the set of *The King of Kings.* Indeed, Paxton has tried to keep the film as lively as possible by incorporating both moving and still images that not only directly depict Rand and her life, but offer an atmospheric sense of her life via certain paintings, photographs, and film clips.

The wildly diverse quality of the film clips gave Paxton a good deal of trouble, however. The first difficulty was in simply finding the appropriate clips. "It was very difficult," says Paxton. "We used Search Works, a researching and licensing company. I gave them a list of the things that we needed, and the project's associate producer, Jeff Britting, who also wrote the score, spearheaded this part of the research process. Some of it happened very quickly, but in other cases I wondered if we would ever get the clips."

Paxton notes that there was a direct relationship between the ease of getting footage and its cost. "The material that I was able to get right away was very expensive," he says. "For example, we were able to get interview material with Tom Snyder from NBC's *The Tomorrow Show* very quickly, but it cost $10,000 a minute. At a certain point, I had run out of money, so some of the stuff had to wait until the very end of production."

Some of the less expensive material was paid for in time. "One of the best things we got was the footage of Ayn testifying before the House Unamerican Activities Committee [HUAC]," says Paxton. "That took — if you can believe this — *a year* for them to send us! They said they had it and would pull it and send it. But it took a year, and then when they did send it, it was 2,000 feet of pretzel-making! It was labeled 'Ayn Rand,' but it was the wrong stuff. It was amazing."

When Paxton finally did acquire footage of Rand and HUAC, he faced yet another difficulty. "They had apparently shot a lot of different people, and it was all very beautiful footage. But Ayn Rand came at the tail end, and something had apparently gone wrong with the battery or something: the camera had slowed down while they were shooting, and

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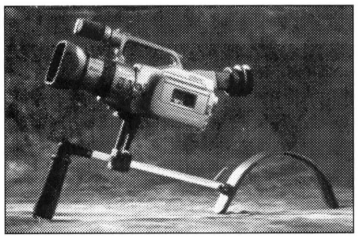


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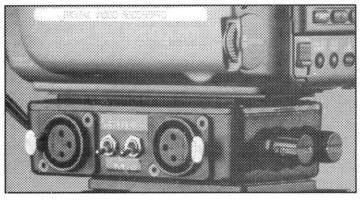
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she was talking like Minnie Mouse." Paxton was able to transfer the footage to video and slow it down in order to clarify Rand's testimony, but he regrettably lost several generations of image quality. Still, the price was right: "It was free, because it was from the archives in Washington."

Because the making of *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life* entailed so much diverse activity taking place at once (including the editing, which began almost as soon as the project itself was underway), Paxton faced a dilemma. While he knew that using an Avid could save time and money, he was also aware that he would be editing over the course of nearly three years. Clearly, he couldn't rent an Avid for that length of time, so he felt forced to edit on film. "That was probably the worst part of the process," says Paxton. "With my clips, I had to shoot sections that I thought I wanted off a kinescope or television onto black-and-white film, and then I would lay that into the film so I could cut it — I couldn't get the actual material until I licensed it. So not having an Avid was tough. If I'd worked on video, I could have popped the video in, used what I wanted, and then ordered exactly what I needed. It would have saved time and money, but I couldn't afford to rent an Avid for three years. Instead, I had a flatbed I could use, which cost me very little. If I'd had all my material at hand at once, it would have been a different story."

Paxton also had to contend with the great range of image quality across his film clips. "What was really disturbing to me was that a lot of the Russian footage, which was very old, was very choppy and looked terrible. I saw some of the same footage on a *National Geographic* special after I'd already put it into my film. They had doctored it up and it looked beautiful, but I couldn't afford to do that. I still think the footage in my movie ultimately gives you a sense of another time and another place, though, and I like that."

Paxton says that one of the only things he changed was the footage taken from *Siegfried.* "I slowed it down as I'd done with the HUAC footage, so that it looked the way it had when [Ayn Rand] saw it. But I couldn't fix the image quality." Paxton also initially tried slowing down *The Mark of Zorro,* but says, "I didn't like it. For its purpose in the film, I decided to leave it the way it was."

Other changes that Paxton made with the films clips made him somewhat uncomfortable, but he felt constrained by the footage he had at his disposal. "With *The Fountainhead,* there's a sequence where the stars, Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal, are in a quarry. It's a beautiful sequence, but Warner Bros. would only give me three minutes, and they were very strict about this rule. Because of that limitation, I had to make the scenes work, so I recut them." Paxton cites a series of glances between actors Cooper and Neal, which are shown in wide shots that gradually give way to close-ups; Paxton adjusted the tempo of the sequence by eliminating many of the medium shots and punching right into the close-ups. "It seemed very inappropriate, but I had to do it; I figured it was okay because I was just trying to get across what was in the movie. Hopefully people will go back, watch the movie and see that it's different."

The television clips posed yet another dilemma altogether. "That was a nightmare," says Paxton. "I had to bring the footage in on video, and we had to center Ayn's face in the 1.85 frame and then do the transfer. They go from video by shooting it onto 16mm and then using what's almost like a Technicolor process with three colored lights, projecting the 16mm image through them onto the 35mm. It's very complicated. But if you look at it, some of the color is

odd; it looks as if it's colorized. And that process is very expensive: $350 a minute. Of course, to edit with it, you have transfer more than you'll use, so it was very expensive. [To make things worse,] I'd get it back only to find that they hadn't really centered it the way they should have."

Complexities also arose from the use of varied formats. "The Mike Wallace show interview footage was kinescoped and the image quality of that footage was very good. But when we centered it, there wasn't enough visual information at the top or bottom, so we were getting television feedback around the edges of the frame. It looks very messy to me, but there wasn't anything I could do."

In addition to using all of this archival material, Paxton shot several interviews and dramatizations with the help of cinematographer Alik Sakharov. "I met Alik through a friend, and we really connected," says Paxton. "He's from Russia and had [gained experience] in black-and-white cinematography and documentary work there. It was clear that he would understand Ayn Rand's Russian side. He certainly understood the black-and-white material that I needed to shoot, and that was important to me. But more than that, we really shared the vision."

Some other interviews were eventually shot by another cinematographer after Sakharov accepted an offer to work on the feature *Love, Valor, Compassion.* According to Paxton, however, the visual design for these sections of the Rand film were primarily generated by his discussions with Sakharov. "Alik is very good conceptually," claims Paxton, "so we'd examine the ideas and really work through them in visual terms. It was a real collaboration of talents."

Within the interviews, Sakharov wanted to create a very simple image. He explains, "We wanted a very distinct, almost stark visual environment. We often used a black background so the subjects



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were almost floating, and we played with different shot sizes and with placing them in different parts of the shot. We then just used an overhead light and some fill light for their eyes."

The interviews were shot on Sakharov's favorite stock, Kodak's 200 ASA 5293. "I started using it on *Midnight Edition*," offers the cinematographer. "It has a wonderful latitude and contrast, and is a great way to show the details in the shadows." For black-and-white segments, he opted for Kodak's 5222: "We wanted it to look like footage from the 1930s, so we used a lot of backlighting and overexposed the images."

The cameraman also employed his favored combination of Panavision cameras and Primo lenses. He attests, "The Primos have good range, are fast and have good contrast. And assistants love them because the markings on the lenses let you follow the action more easily."

To tone down skin colors, Sakharov utilized a Tiffen 1/4 Black Pro Mist filter. "Overall, it was the simplicity that I liked. It always works — the less complexities there are, the better it is. And with the budget [being so small], I couldn't order up a storm of equipment anyway. But in all of my work, simplicity is what works. Nestor Almendros [ASC]'s work is a perfect example of this — very simple, very human."

When asked if he knew how grueling the making of *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life* would be, Paxton responds, "I had no idea. But if you look at the original script and the final project, they're pretty close. The first cut was three and a half hours, and people who sat through that cut said they weren't bored. I knew I couldn't leave it that long, but once I started getting all of this material together, I found myself focusing on this sense of life, this element of Ayn Rand that people don't usually see." ■

Man of the People

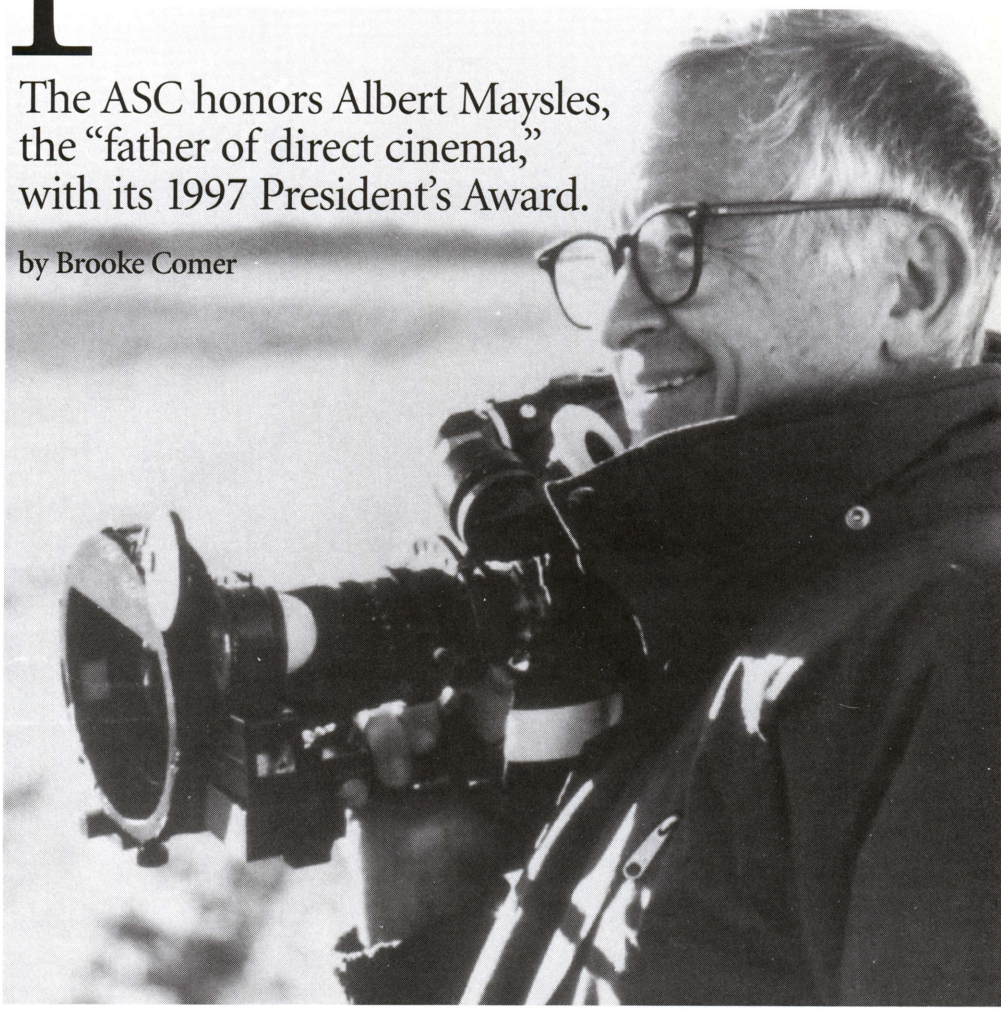
The ASC honors Albert Maysles, the "father of direct cinema," with its 1997 President's Award.

by Brooke Comer

It can be argued that no filmmaker has come closer to capturing the real lives of everyday people than Albert Maysles. His ability to bridge the barrier between documentarian and subject is not a learned skill or technique; rather, it is his keen interest in the lives of ordinary people that leads him to discover their extraordinary qualities.



Photos courtesy of Maysles Film.



Albert (above, with trusty camera) felt the lure of travel early in life. At left, he and his brother, David, take in Moscow's sights during a 1957 motorcycle trip through Russia. The duo would later form a professional bond as well, collaborating on some 15 films together.

It should come as no surprise to those who know Maysles' work that the "father of direct cinema" has been chosen by the American Society of Cinematographers to receive the organization's 1997 President's Award. Along with his filmmaking partners — his brother, David, Charlotte Zwerin and Susan Froemke — Maysles produced a total of 15 films; their output included the seminal documentary *Salesman* (1967), as well as fascinating pictures on such diverse subjects as the Rolling Stones (*Gimme Shelter,* 1970); an eccentric mother and daughter in their decaying East Hampton home (*Grey Gardens,* 1976); and the artist Christo (*Running Fence,* 1978 and *Islands,* 1986). Albert has also collaborated with several other giants of the documentary genre, such as Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker and Bob Drew. Maysles will be honored at the 12th Annual ASC Awards event, to be held on March 8 at the Century

Man of the People

A Bible pitchman hawks his wares as the Maysles brothers capture the moment for their acclaimed 1967 documentary *Salesman*.

Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles.

"Al Maysles is an extraordinary man," says ASC member Conrad Hall, who used "real people" scenes shot by Maysles to amplify his much-lauded cinematography in the film *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. "He is one of the few people I'd call a complete filmmaker."

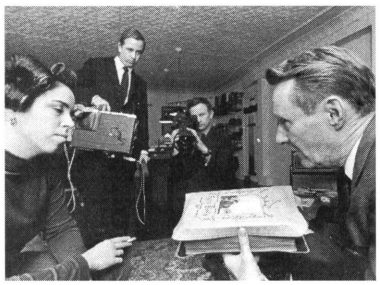
ASC President Owen Roizman agrees, stating, "We don't give this prize simply for cinematography; it's given to someone who's made a unique contribution to the art of filmmaking. I am delighted that Al Maysles was chosen this year, because his films include some of the most unique, interesting and innovative works I have ever seen. He is truly a credit to our profession, and he is known and loved by many, many people."

Silence fed Maysles' passion for art. "As a child, I didn't speak," he explains. "It wasn't a deformity, I was just extremely quiet. No one knew if I was bright or dumb, so I had to repeat kindergarten. But my personality made me an avid listener, which served me very well."

He was seven years old when he bought his first still camera at a hardware store: a 35-cent Univex, made of bakelite and small enough to fit into the palm of his hand. His first subjects were members of his family; his father, a postal clerk, and his mother, a schoolteacher, were Russian immigrants. His brother, David, would later become his filmic collaborator, and his sister, Barbara, pursued a career as an artist.

The young Maysles was able to capture the unique spirit of his family even in his earliest photographs, evoking a sense of reality and humanity which would become a trademark of his later documentary work. "I think photographers, like writers, consciously or unconsciously tend to go back to their childhood and use their early images and experiences," the filmmaker offers. "Perhaps one reason why books are so often more powerful than their translation to film is that during the filming process, [the material] inevitably gets detached from the author's original artistic cravings."

By the time he was 10 years old, Maysles discovered *Popular Mechanics* magazine. Inspired by an article entitled "How To Build Your Own Enlarger," the young photographer made one of his own, using the lens of a Voigtlander Bessa camera he had purchased. But after several years



without a proper still camera, he decided to suspend his burgeoning career. "I was extremely ambitious, and I felt that until I had a Leica, I'd put everything on hold."

In his early twenties, Maysles was teaching psychology as a graduate student at Boston University, and working as a research assistant at a mental hospital. He decided to use his summer vacation to motorcycle all over Europe with a Leica borrowed from a friend. It was during this journey that he shot what he describes as his "first really professional photographs."

Maysles and his requisite Leica crossed the Atlantic again the next summer, en route to Russia, where the budding artist shot still photographs inside Russian mental hospitals. He recalls, "I chose that particular subject because I was interested in what was happening in Russia, but I wanted to get away from the solely political approach everyone else was taking, with everything going on in the Kremlin, but nothing close to ordinary people."

Before he left for Russia, however, *Life* magazine turned down Maysles' pitch to do a photo essay on Russian mental hospitals — not because the publication was adverse to the idea, but because its editors couldn't give the photographer the advance cash necessary to pay his way. As he walked out of the Time-Life building, Maysles looked up at a sign that said "CBS," and decided to give television a try. His cold call was a success; Maysles was ushered in to meet the head of the CBS news department, who loaned him a 16mm Keystone movie camera and agreed to pay one dollar for every foot of his film the network used, with the understanding that Maysles would retain the rights to all of the film he shot.

The wind-up Keystone posed various challenges; the camera was "so amateurish," says Maysles, "that you couldn't even focus the lens. It was no Bolex, and it was certainly no Bell & Howell. But the f2.5 lens allowed me to shoot in the dark conditions often found indoors."

CBS paid Maysles $14 for the 14 feet of footage they eventually aired. The youthful cameraman used his remaining material to create his first formal documentary, entitled *Psychiatry in Russia*. He had hoped to sell the finished film to NBC, "but the program director at the network looked at it and turned the project down because it didn't have the kind of 'freak value' he was looking for," Maysles remembers. Instead, *Psychiatry in Russia* was scheduled to air on Boston's PBS station, WGBH.

As Maysles edited his project in a makeshift room in a warehouse across the street from WGBH, he was approached by Smith, Kline and French, a pharmaceutical company that offered the filmmaker $2,500 for the right to make 50 prints of the film for their own use. "They'd heard about my project via the grapevine," Maysles says, "and thought the film would be of interest to American psychiatrists." *Psychiatry In Russia* ended up paying his traveling

expenses after all.

Maysles was returning from his second trip to Russia, this time on a motorscooter, when he had a memorable stopover in England. His brother, David, had finished his service in the army and was working as a production assistant on *The Prince and the Showgirl* at Pinewood Studios in England. Maysles remembers arriving at Pinewood on his motor scooter and being ushered into Marilyn Monroe's dressing room. "She wanted to meet me because she heard I'd been visiting mental hospitals," Maysles recalls. "She was very interested in psychology, and the questions she asked me were rather clever; she even wanted to know if I'd ever been psychoanalyzed." He had not.

Encouraged by his sudden success as a documentary filmmaker, Maysles stopped teaching and spent another summer on a trip with his brother, traveling by motorcycle from Munich to Moscow. During their travels, they happened upon a student revolution in Poland, which they filmed. The footage later aired on NBC, accompanied by Chet Huntley's narration.

Maysles' nascent career took a crucial turn when he met documentarian D.A. Pennebaker, whose work would eventually include the 1965 Bob Dylan portrait *Don't Look Back* and the seminal concert chronicle *Monterey Pop*. When David Maysles showed Pennebaker *Psychiatry in Russia*, the latter deemed it the best first film he'd ever seen. Pennebaker then introduced the elder Maysles brother to Bob Drew and Richard Leacock, who were about to push the envelope of documentary filmmaking with a distinctly American twist on the French "cinema verité" style.



Albert (foreground) and David exude the air of seasoned professionals in this snapshot, taken later in their careers.

The American approach "made you feel you were really there, as an observer behind the scenes," says Maysles, who prefers the term "direct cinema" when referring to his work with his brother. "Unlike the French version, nothing was staged.

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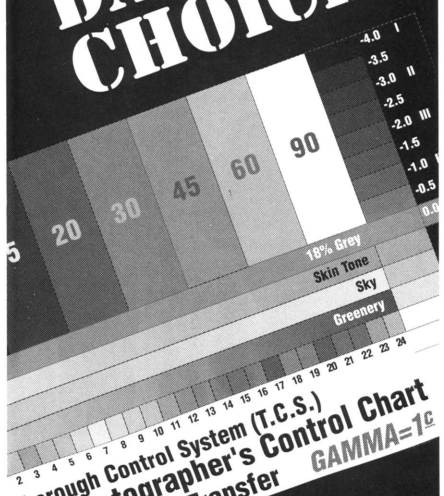
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More than ever, viewers could feel what it was like to be in the shoes of the subjects."

Together, Leacock, Drew, Maysles and Pennebaker made the film *Primary*, an insightful look at the 1959 Democratic primary campaign between John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. The film was Maysles' first sync-sound collaboration, and the filmmaker remembers a particular shot of John and Jackie Kennedy as they entered an auditorium and walked down an aisle through a crowd: "I stayed right with them. Pennebaker handed me a wide-angle lens, which was very daring back then, and I kept the camera over the back of John Kennedy's head as I followed him." The wide angle allowed Maysles to capture the crowds looking up at Kennedy as he moved through them. "I couldn't see what I was shooting, but I knew that the camera was seeing what Kennedy was experiencing."

Documentary filmmaking was forever changed after Drew and his fellow filmmakers received a grant from Time-Life to design a battery-operated double-system sync camera that did not require an umbilical cable link-up to the sound recorder. "For the first time, we were using sync-sound cameras portably," says Maysles. "The basic idea was really revolutionary, because we could suddenly get so much closer to reality without imposing on it. The new camera was created from parts of several existing models; it was part Auricon, and the tape recorder was a Perfectone. The speed of both the camera and sound recorder was governed independently by a highly accurate electronic tuning-fork mechanism in each device.

"Zoom lenses also allowed us a lot of flexibility, so we could be near or far without moving around and distracting people," he continues. "Suddenly, the camera became a servant to reality rather than a device used to manipulate it. Scenes filmed as they evolved could be as dramatic as in a preconceived film, but more compelling and engaging. Things that pass as totally credible in a documentary, because they are real, would seem all too implausible in a concocted, scripted feature film."

One of the Maysles' most commercial films was *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.* (later retitled *The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit*). Albert didn't even know who the Beatles were when he got a call from Granada Television in England informing him that the Fab Four would be arriving at New York's Idlewild (later JFK) Airport in a few hours. Fortunately, his brother David did, so when the Maysles were asked if they would make a film of the band's arrival in America, the answer was a quick "Yes." They were soon rushing to the airport to film the band coming off the plane. Maysles, reports, "We stayed with them night and day, so we were able to capture exactly what they were going through in the thick of it, something that would have been impossible in a planned scene for a film."

"I can see the courage and the payoff on those occasions when people let loose their troubles, take a chance and expose their vulnerabilities. It's the talent and the responsibility of the filmmaker to discern an act of courage from an act of foolishness."

— Albert Maysles

Unfortunately, the brothers were unable to capitalize on their nonfiction feature about the famous quartet after completing the film in 1964. Maysles explains, "Even though Columbia Pictures offered us a million dollars for the film, we weren't allowed to show it in movie theaters because we couldn't get a release from the Beatles. The band had a

project on their schedule called *A Hard Day's Night* which they were about to make, and United Artists didn't want another film to eclipse theirs, especially since theirs would be a fictional replica of ours." A shorter version of *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.* did have one run on CBS, but only with the proviso that actress Carol Burnett, whose own show's ratings were lagging, narrate the picture.

This would not be the last of Maysles' films to be withheld from audiences. One of his most famous works, *Salesman*, a portrait of four door-to-door bible salesmen, languished for 25 years before it was aired on the PBS television program *POV*. Maysles observes, "It's particularly ironic that *Salesman* aired on *POV*, because we've always stressed that only by distancing oneself from a 'point of view' do you remain open to discovering the unanticipated."

Maysles himself had worked as a salesman during high school to pay his tuition through college, peddling Fuller brushes and then encyclopedias door-to-door. "On my first time out, I got so nervous after I knocked on the door that I couldn't remember my sales pitch. But the woman who let me in must have sympathized, because she bought a set of encyclopedias. Later, I came to realize that one of the most important aspects of filmmaking is liking, believing, and trusting in people. Making documentaries is such an odd thing; what you're doing, in a way, is just a surface phenomenon, because you're filming only what can appear before you — and yet, what you're thinking is so important. As Albert Fzent-Gyorgi put it, 'Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.'

"The process of discovery is an exciting adventure which becomes even more intense because you're recording your experience at the same time," he adds. "The experience is really of the other person you're filming, so you're also performing a service for them and for your audience, who may for the first time in their lives feel precisely what it's like to be a coal miner, a daughter, a salesman, a dying person, to be loved or hated. It's limitless."

Maysles credits much of his filmmaking success to his brother, David. "We couldn't have made all of those films without each other," he says. "There was no sibling rivalry because we weren't in competitive roles. We worked as a filming team, with me behind the camera. David also took control of postproduction, and we both found stories and made decisions. But above all, we held ourselves subservient to our subjects and the quality of our films."

In describing this symbiotic relationship, Maysles again recalls the motorcycle trip that the brothers took through Eastern Europe in 1957. "We were on back roads traveling an exhausting 200 to 300 miles a day, driving in turns. When one of us got tired, he'd move to the rear seat and rest his head on the shoulder of the driver and put his arms around the driver's waist. The driver then steered with one hand on the handlebar and the other clasping his brother's hands tightly together so that if he dozed, he wouldn't fall off. That's the image I have of how we worked together."

The siblings found their parents to be key inspirations. Albert explains, "My mother was a schoolteacher who took steps to better her life even as an immigrant child; she found a philanthropist, a Mrs. Storrow, whose dream was to inspire immigrant children, many of Jewish and Italian parents. She had a house by the ocean where the children would come to study music and art, and get exposure to a side of life they'd otherwise never have known.

"My father was a postal clerk, which is not a glamorous career, but he symbolized the greatness of the

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Man of the People

common man. Because of him, we usually chose to explore the lives of ordinary people instead of celebrities, which is exactly what we did in *Salesman.* Paul, the main subject in that film, turned out to be a lot like my father. They both had characters that touched the heart and soul.

The intensely personal direction that Maysles' films take "can seem strange to some people," he admits, "because secrets are revealed that wouldn't normally be disclosed. The more revealing and personal a film is, the more open you are to the charge of being intrusive. But according to those who know, such as health-care experts, it's healthier to disclose things than to keep secrets. A well-made documentary film serves the purpose of helping people disclose things they hold inside — as opposed to the tasteless displays on a *Geraldo*-type of show, which I deplore.

"I can see the courage and the payoff on those occasions when people let loose their troubles, take a chance and expose their vulnerabilities. It's the talent and the responsibility of the filmmaker to discern an act of courage from an act of foolishness."

When Maysles was a child, he spent as much time at the Brookline, Massachusetts library as he did in his homemade darkroom. He remembers, "I'll never forget the day I found a book called *Architects of Ideas: Great Theories of Mankind,* which included Copernicus, Marx, Freud and Einstein. The introduction asked the question 'What is the purpose of life?' As an answer, the piece described the flight of a bird, which comes up over the horizon. You observe it, it's beautiful, then it flies away and disappears over the horizon — to where, no one knows."

When David Maysles died in 1987, Albert spoke at his memorial service, and he recalled that description of life as symbolized in the flight of the bird. "When we all walked out of the chapel in South Hampton, a very strange thing happened. Just at that moment, an enormous flight of birds crossed the sky."

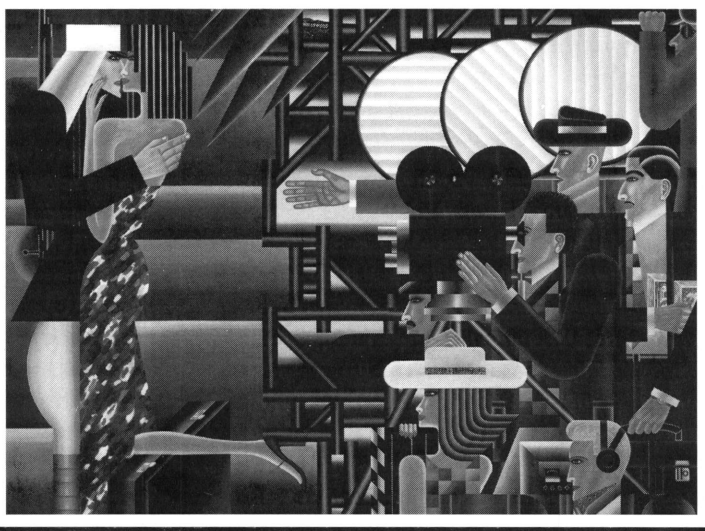
Coincidences have not governed Maysles' life, but enough have cropped up to astound him. "As Edie Bouvier in *Grey Gardens* says, 'Everything is time and place,' and I've been lucky to be at the right place at the right time." As an example, he revisits the moment when he and his brother met Pennebaker, who in turn introduced them to Richard Leacock and Bob Drew, with whom Albert launched his career: "I suppose I've been fortunate enough to be better served by chance than control, by reality more than fiction, by a confidence in life whichever way it goes." ■

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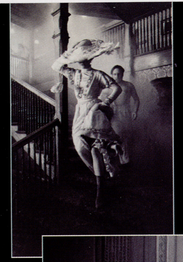
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(6m)



(7j)



(8r)



(9d)

Framing Film History

Expert still photographers have long labored, both literally and figuratively, in the shadows of the film set. Since the earliest days of moviemaking, when still photographers toiled behind large, cumbersome cameras on mammoth tripods, there has always been a crew member whose job is to record all that transpires in front of and behind the motion picture camera. It is a vital and underappreciated responsibility, since the still photographer often holds in his camera the only tangible evidence — besides the movie itself — of a project's existence. In 1995, four of Hollywood's most respected unit still photographers — Peter Sorel, Tony Friedkin, Melinda Sue Gordon and Merrick Morton — formed the Society of Motion Picture Still Photographers, in the interest of providing a forum for the craft's most talented practitioners. The quartet took its cues from the venerable American Society of Cinematographers. "Not only did the ASC give me the idea to start the society," explains SMPSP president Peter Sorel, "but I even asked [then ASC president] Victor Kemper if I could borrow from his organization's bylaws. We formed our society for exactly the same reason that the cinematographers initially had — to bring together the most excellent photographers in the business, and give them a forum where they could talk to each other. Most motion picture still photographers had never even met each other, but now we regularly have meetings every couple of months at a different member's home. It's a group in which everybody is interested in the same things — really fine photography, and trying to help each other in a way that wasn't possible before."

The society now has 18 active members and three honorary members, including actor and Widelux-wielding camera enthusiast Jeff Bridges ("He's pretty good!" Sorel enthuses), and legendary magazine photographers Bob Willoughby and Phil Stern. Since the SMPSP is an open society, any working unit still photographer is welcome to join, provided that a high-quality portfolio is approved by the existing members. "We do not stick to the idea that a member has to be in the [International Photographers Guild] union," says the Hungarian-born Sorel, a 34-year veteran of the industry who was invited to visit his first film production, a low-budget 1963 picture called *Time Travelers*, by his friend and fellow countryman Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC. "If non-union photographers were to apply and submit portfolios, they would be just as welcome to join, as long as they're good. This is not a political society — it exists for nothing but the betterment of photography in this industry."

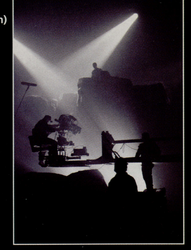
Paramount to the society's manifesto are the historical implications of the still photographer's work. "For the last 20 years, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences library has only received and archived the color slides from the studios' movie press kits, which are printed on plastic and fade out in a few years," Sorel says. "After working on a movie, each member of the society is encouraged to donate two or three of their archival silver prints to the Academy's library. When people see the press kit slides and then look at our work in print form, they say 'Wow!'"

Fellow SMPSP founder Melinda Sue Gordon, whose credits include such films as *Field of Dreams*, *Unstrung Heroes*, *Liar Liar* and director Peter Weir's soon-to-be-released *The Truman Show*, is hesitant to lay the blame for the photographic void entirely on the studios. "[The studios] are so overwhelmed with the films they've got in production right now that they don't really have the facilities or the people to archive everything," she attests. "I went to the Academy to look at their archives, and until about 1960 they had extensive coverage of films — wardrobe tests, set tests, and even special takes of scenes that productions back then would do just for the still photographers. But from the early 1960s on, the Academy has almost no coverage of films except for the stills included in the press kits. There are many films that aren't even around anymore — all that's left are the stills! The people behind the lens are also important — production designers, grips, electricians, all of the people who use their skills to make these films happen. It's a whole era and a group of people whose efforts should be recorded."

The society's members note that a significant portion of their work — artistic, humorous, even surreal images from the set which often aren't included in the generally more straightforward studio press kits — often go unseen by the general public.

"I'm interested in the process of filmmaking as an artist, because of the whole issue of illusion and reality," says SMPSP co-founder Tony Friedkin, who has balanced his personal fine-art photography with work on films such as *American Me*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Murder in the First* and *The Game*. "It's all about an actor getting up

Photo Credits
(1n) *Batman Forever*
(2k) *Frances*
(3n) *Jaws IV The Revenge*
(4r) *Starship Troopers*
(5g) *Battlestar Galactica*
(6m) *The Road to Wellville*
(7j) *The Lost World*
(8r) *Blade Runner*
(9d) *Cliffhanger*
(10q) *Ed Wood*
(11c) *Pulp Fiction*
(12o) *The First Wives Club*
(13h) *The Truman Show*
(14a) *The English Patient*
(15d) *Maverick*
(16h) "Steadicam Silhouette"
(17H) *The Truman Story*
(18j) *Schindler's List*
(19g) *Death of an Angel*
(20b) *Casino*
(21i) *Boys on the Side*
(22p) "Darius Khondji, AFC"



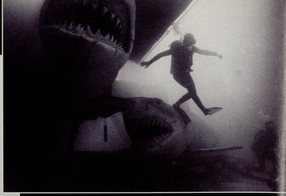
(1n)

Framing Film History

Motion-picture still photographers artfully document movies and their makers for posterity.

by Chris Pizzello

If cinematographers are the Rembrandts of cinema, motion-picture still photographers serve as the Cartier-Bressons. Just as the legendary French photojournalist hunted relentlessly for the "decisive moments" of everyday life, the unit still photographer seeks to capture those fleeting moments on a film set when the cinematographer's light, the actor's performance and the production designer's milieu gel perfectly in front of the director, revealing the dramatic essence of a film. As the accompanying photo spread demonstrates, these photographers' efforts often qualify as artistic triumphs in their own right.



(3n)



(2k)



(4r)



(5g)

Society of Motion Picture Still Photographers
Phil Bray (a)
Phil Caruso (b)
Linda R. Chen (c)
Andrew Cooper (d)
François Duhamel (e)
Richard Foreman (f)
Anthony Friedkin (g)
Melinda Sue Gordon (h)
Suzanne Hanover-Fowler (i)
David James (j)
Gemma La Mana (k)
Elliott Marks (l)
Merrick Morton (m)
Ralph Nelson (n)
Andy Schwartz (o)
Peter Sorel (p)
Suzanne Tenner (q)
Stephen Vaughan (r)



(10q)



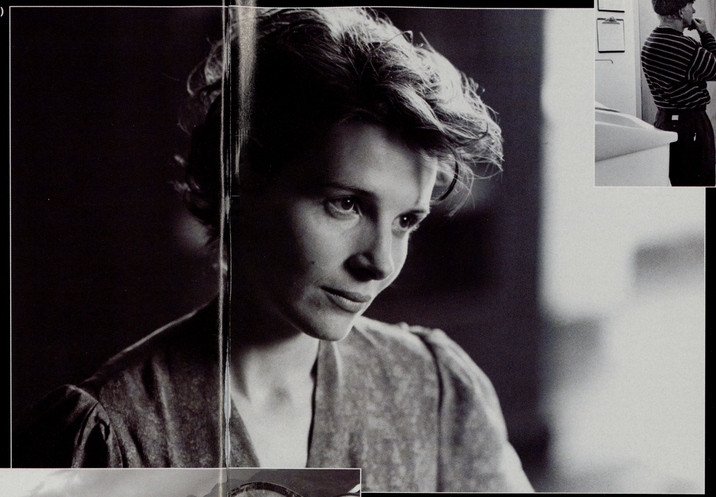
(11c)



(12o)



(13h)



(14a)



(15d)



(16h)



(17H)



(18j)



(19g)



(20b)



(21i)



(22p)

after he's been shot 600 times with a fake Uzi and going to the craft services table to get a salami sandwich! Or here's an actor with a knife sticking out of his eye, and he's smiling. As a fine-art photographer, I like to subvert the idea that movies are real life, and I explore [the dichotomy] any time I can while I'm on the set. If I suddenly see an image that's outrageous, ridiculous or moving, but doesn't have anything to do with the needs of the press or publicity department, I'll still shoot it. We've got all of these great moments between actors and directors, wonderful images that reveal the context of the moviemaking process, that don't make the press kit."

"To me, a good shot doesn't always include the actor or director," states Sorel, who documented such classic films as *Easy Rider, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* "In the last few years, I've been shooting a lot more for my own satisfaction, and those are the shots that eventually end up in exhibits — images like shadows on the wall or objects on the floor of the movie set. You can't get complacent and just say, 'My job is to service the publicity machine.' If you have an artistic eye, you're not going to be happy just doing that — you have to give people more. Even on an unimaginative-looking film set, *something* happens every day that's worth photographing."

Providing the movie studio with sharp, well-exposed and dynamic photos of major actors and pivotal scenes will always be the unit still photographer's "bread and butter," but a director's clout can be an influential factor in which stills are chosen to represent a film. British-born SMPSP member David James, who has photographed three of Steven Spielberg's most recent films — *Schindler's List, The Lost World* and

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Framing Film History

the upcoming *Saving Private Ryan* — says that the famed director maintains a unique and photographer-friendly *modus operandi* when it comes to culling stills from his productions. Rather than simply handing off his film and transparencies to the studio publicity department, James reveals, Spielberg "trusts [me] to pick the pictures myself. Whatever I want to show him is what he'll look at. He never looks at my contact sheets. I show Steven the 8-by-10s that I'd like him to see, he selects the ones he likes, and those shots then go to publicity."

Since the director has a huge passion for still photography, the hands-on arrangement means that Spielberg's movies will often be represented by some unusually daring and iconoclastic unit still photography. "*Saving Private Ryan* is about World War II and the Normandy landings," James explains, "so I made [legendary war photographer] Robert Capa my hero for the film. I tried as hard as I could to emulate his work in my stills. If one of my photos looked like a blurred war picture, it was a winner. I've got more pictures of the back of [star] Tom Hanks' head than I have of the front, because you never saw a combat war photographer running backwards in front of soldiers in World War II. They'd be keeping low behind the soldiers, so that they wouldn't get hit!"

While it's tempting for still photographers to focus much of their attention on the actors, those behind the camera often prove to be every bit as expressive. During the shooting of *Schindler's List*, James was aware of the emotional toll the project was having on Spielberg. "We were shooting the last scene of the movie at an old factory in Poland, when Oskar Schindler is put in a car and drives away with tears running down his cheek," the photographer recalls. "Steven said, 'That's it, it's a wrap.' He was at his monitor, and his back was to me. Suddenly he put his hands on the monitor and started crying! His wife, Kate, was touching his shoulder, and I shot that moment. You can't see Steven's face in the photo, but you can tell it's him from the cap and the jacket. It's probably my favorite shot of Steven."

Another unheralded aspect of the unit still photographer's responsibilities is the shooting of images that will be featured *in* the finished movie, such as a framed family photo propped up on a character's desk or a montage of black-and-white photos in a period film. "You end up being every kind of photographer you can imagine," Melinda Sue Gordon comments. "We do advertising photography, period photography. You always try to figure out who you are as a photographer, why you're there, and how you would be shooting it. On *The Truman Show*, it was a particular challenge because so much of the back story between the characters had to be established through my photographs. I actually had a week with the actors that was fully scheduled in the production. You end up functioning as a director in a way, moving actors through these photo sessions. I shot a wedding between [stars] Jim Carrey and Laura Linney, and we had bridesmaids, a reception, the whole bit. I also had to shoot a high school graduation, Thanksgivings, Christmases, and birthday parties involving characters at three different ages."

James finds himself constantly stimulated by the sheer photographic variety to be found on film sets and locations. "You're somewhat of a time-traveling photographer," he says. "I've shot in the 13th century for *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. I've been on the planet Mars with Arnold Schwarzenegger for *Total Recall*. I've been on the Normandy beaches in World War II on *Saving Private Ryan*, and in the Jewish ghettoes in the 1940s for *Schindler's List*. Who knows where I'll be next?"

Not surprisingly, the myriad visual challenges facing the unit still photographer demand total technical mastery. In the opening montage of *Field of Dreams*, Super 8 footage and home video were mixed with "aged" still photographs shot by Gordon. "The sequence started off at the turn of the century with old family photos," Gordon relates. "I shot a black-and-white photo of a little boy in a cornfield, printed it and then soaked it in a combination of tea, coffee and yellow food dye. The montage then moved into what was supposed to be the 1960s, when color photography was becoming more common. I shot a photo straight on 2 1/4" transparency, made a print and then dyed it to give it that golden ['60s] photographic look. There are several books on the preservation of photography, and I used examples of how it's done wrong as a kind of guideline!"

Similarly, for *The Game*, Tony Friedkin was asked by director David Fincher to provide a photo for a pivotal moment in the story when Michael Douglas' character finds an old photo of his father's suicide. "It was supposed to look as if it was shot in the 1950s by a police photographer, so I ended used a 4-by-5 camera with 4-by-5 film, just as they had in those days. I then worked with the lab really carefully to make sure the photo looked 'aged.' Even though the picture is onscreen for only a tiny amount of time, if I had shot it in 35mm, the audience would not have found it credible."

In general, however, the still photographer's role on the set is that of an observer rather than a participant. As one of the few crew members not usually making a direct contribution to what's onscreen, the still photographer can face some frustrating, occasionally insurmountable technical difficulties. Always challenging are evening and low-light scenes, since the cinematographer is lighting for the specifications of the motion-picture camera rather than the still camera.

"I got the lowest light reading of my entire career on *The Game*," Friedkin says with a laugh, recalling his work on director David Fincher's dark, nocturnal psychological thriller. "I was shooting with 1600 ASA film, at a shutter speed of 1/60 of a second and an *0.75* f-stop! At one point I said to David and [cinematographer] Harrison Savides, 'You guys have just broken the record!' Onscreen it's going to look okay because there's movement in the frame and actors moving from one side of the room to the other. But from a stills standpoint, you're dead. You'd like to change the lighting, but obviously you can't. You just have to employ super-fast lenses and maybe use a monopod, or just stay as rock-steady as you can at 1/15 of a second. Thank God film manufacturers have come up with some new high-speed color print films."

Low light levels aren't the only hazard of the job. At other times the unit still photographer can be at the mercy of more political considerations in the high-stakes climate of contemporary Hollywood filmmaking. One of the long-term goals of the SMPSP is to improve the standing of the unit still photographer within the sometimes rigid caste system of a Hollywood film crew. "I told the society's members from the very beginning, 'Whatever we do now,

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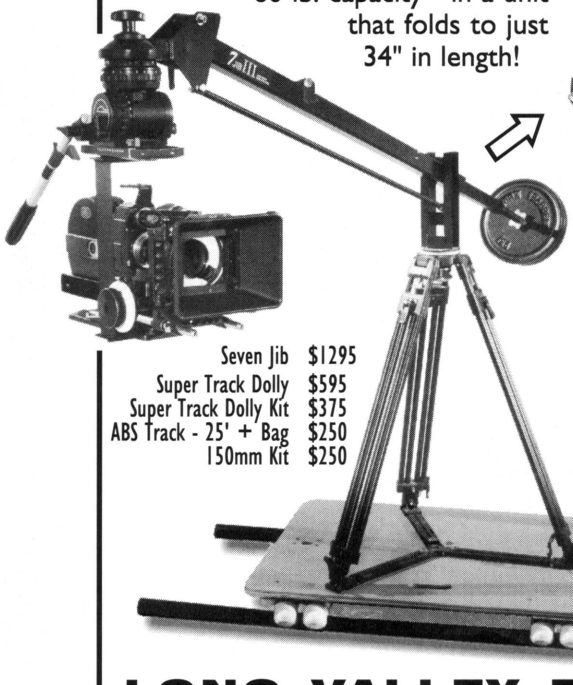
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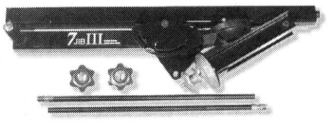
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we'll probably never see the fruits of our labor, but it will be a blessing for the next generation of still photographers,'" Sorel says. "It will take a lot of time to get attitudes to change. You know, Hollywood is Hollywood. Right now it's a paradise for actors and agents, but not for everybody else. Still photographers often have a very tough time. On certain shows, an actor will say, 'You can't be there, you're in my eyeline.' On other shows, you might be working with a director who just doesn't want to give you any time at all. In this day and age, whether it's a big-budget or low-budget movie, sometimes the only thing that's important to the first assistant director is what's on the screen for the next day's dailies. As a still photographer, your work is going to be used six months down the line, so often they don't want to spend that extra second to allow you to get a shot."

All of the SMPSP members *AC* interviewed stress that an unflagging sense of set etiquette goes a long way toward improving the still photographer's lot. "Usually, as long as you're nice to everybody in the crew, they're sweet-as-pie to you," says David James. "You have to be a photographer, a diplomat, and sometimes a schmoozer. The crew has their job to do, and what they're doing goes up on the big screen. What we're shooting is a marketing tool, but without our stills, [assessing a movie] would be like going to a grocery store and seeing cans of vegetables on the shelf with no labels on them: how do you know what's inside? We put the 'label' on a film with our stills. But in putting the 'label' on the film, we're not supposed to interfere with what's in it."

A necessity of the still photographer's unobtrusive ethos is the use of a "blimp," a hard, somewhat bulky casing that surrounds the camera and lens, making the package almost completely soundproof. But equally important is the photographer's sense of placement and movement. "If I have a good relationship with an actor, I'll say, 'I'd like to shoot from here. Would it bother you if I'm in your eyeline?' James explains. "Nine times out of ten, they'll say, 'No, as long as you don't move.' The big thing is not to move. And when I stop shooting, I'll lower my camera, look away and keep still. I don't ever make eye contact with the actors, because that would be a distraction for them. It's just a golden rule — I become a lump of wood."

"Every film is different," Gordon points out. "Some actors come from the stage, and as soon as the camera stops, they're out of character. Others are more Method-oriented and want to maintain their sense of character throughout the day. I try to tailor how I work with how they want to work. In a way, it's kind of like being professional wallpaper. On the set there's a sound boom person, a first assistant following focus, a supervisor, a director, a cinematographer and the camera itself — all of those elements are focused on the actors. And then there's me. I just try to become part of that wall of what's going on, rather than an extra element that will catch their attention."

Perhaps the still photographer's most important responsibility is to convey the message or *feel* of a film without the directorial luxuries of sound and motion. "My responsibility is to make the movie in stills," Friedkin explains. "I'm directing a movie that, to me, is just as important as the movie the cast and crew are making. If you're shooting a two-shot of actors, you have to search for the dramatic moment that will reveal the context of the characters' relationship. Do these characters hate each other? Do they like each other? Are they lovers? If you're shooting a film that has a certain psychological terror, such as *The Game*, you have to shoot photos that indicate that you're in an edgy world. If it's a love story like *The Bridges of Madison County*, you really want to show the deep affection that Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep created as actors."

Sorel has already initiated the practice of placing the SMPSP title after a member's name on film credits, in the style of other professional societies like the ASC and ACE. Upcoming projects for the society include a large exhibit in the fall of 1998 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, as well as a possible exhibit at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the year 2000. Members' work is also displayed each summer at a Kodak-sponsored showcase during the annual ShowBiz Expo. The SMPSP is also pursuing some other long-term projects, such as a possible calendar and coffee-table photo book.

Friedkin puts the importance of motion picture still photographers in historical perspective, making the salient point that all filmmakers should never forget the real roots of their craft. "A lot of people in film production don't remember that without the invention of still photography, movies wouldn't even exist!" the photographer remarks with a note of incredulity. "Sometimes I want to remind the people who think of us as a nuisance, 'Hey, guess what! You wouldn't even be here if someone hadn't invented a still camera!' The reason movies are being made today is that there were still photographers who spent the time to develop cameras, chemistry and optics." ■

Triumph of the Ill

Filmmaker Kirby Dick brings an unflinching eye to *Sick*, a daring and shockingly intimate look at the last days of Bob Flanagan, the "supermasochist" who turned a lifetime of pain into performance art.

by David E. Williams



Photos courtesy of Cinepix Film Properties.

Undeterred by his illness, Flanagan performs from his sickbed in a multimedia show.

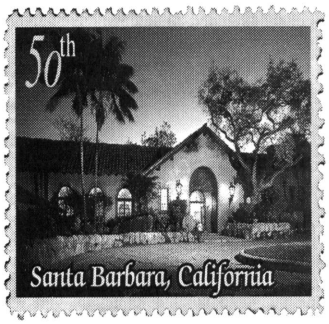
When he died in 1996 at the age of 43, Bob Flanagan was the longest-living victim of cystic fibrosis, a congenital disease that gradually rendered his lungs all but useless, drowning them in viscous fluids. While alive, Flanagan was constantly in and out of hospitals, but he defied his illness through a sadomasochistic lifestyle he had surreptitiously begun while still in grade school, willfully adding to his physical suffering while outliving his doctor's predictions. The irony of his lot was not lost on Flanagan, who became a writer, visual artist and performer; a macabre sense of humor punctuated his work, which was at times as disturbing as his health predicament.

Aided by his dominant partner, Sheree Rose, Flanagan subjected himself to ritualistic S&M sessions involving what many would define as painful abuse; Rose directed him to chronicle this "torture" in diaries and other writings while she, in turn, recorded their activities in still photographs and on video. Out of this collaboration came a series of installations and performance-art exhibits not meant for the squeamish; these works regularly concluded with the submissive Flanagan immobilized and battered, seemingly satisfied that this distress — unlike the ceaseless torment of his illness — would eventually end.

Not long after Flanagan was rejected as a candidate for a lung transplant, he became too physically weak to endure Rose's loving punishments. At times, his anger and frustrations boiled to the surface, though his humor often revealed itself in shockingly funny ways.

A longtime friend of the couple, filmmaker Kirby Dick (whose credits include the award-winning 1986 film *Private Practices: The Story of a Sex Surrogate,* and the screenplay for the 1993 dramatic film *Guy*) approached Flanagan and Rose with the idea of making a formal documentary about Bob's life, illness and art. Not unexpectedly, there was some resistance, but Dick was eventually allowed extraordinary access to the couple's relationship. The result is *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan,* a startlingly frank film which went on to earn a Special Jury Prize at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival and accolades as Best Feature at the 1997 Los Angeles Independent Film Festival. Dick explains, "The primary reason I'm attracted to making documentaries is the intensity of the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject. In editing, you have another opportunity to reconsider that relationship; it's a meditation not only on the subject but on one's self as well. I wanted to go beyond that with Bob and Sheree, though. I wanted to work with people I already knew because I didn't want to have to go through the trust-building stage. I was making the film,

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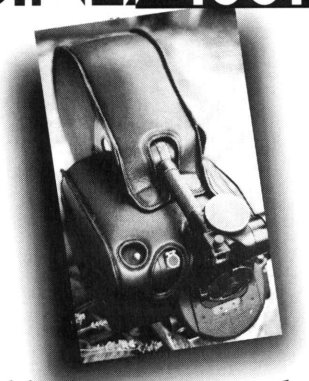


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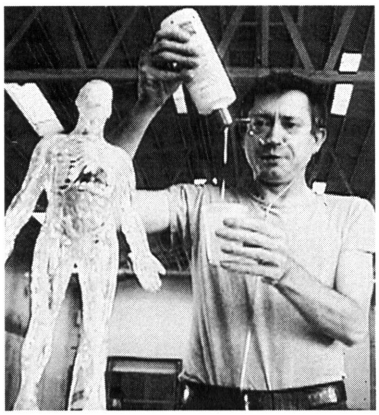
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but during production it became more like a partnership.

"Yet while Bob and Sheree were very extroverted, and would allow anybody to film them in any public situation, in private she had exclusive control over that process. When I came in and proposed shooting the documentary, that meant that she would become a subject. It changed her role, and at first she was uncomfortable with that."



Above: Flanagan constructs "The Visible Man," a fully functional, anatomically correct model of himself, for a gallery show. Below right: Filmmaker Kirby Dick.

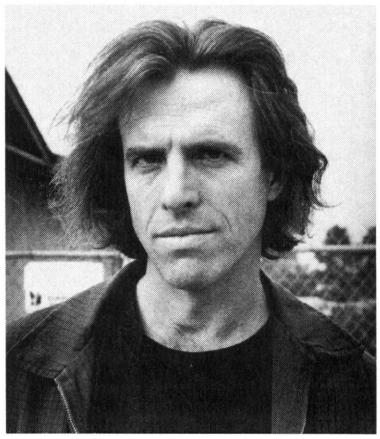
Dick ultimately gained Rose's trust after shooting and editing several vignettes that appear in *Sick*, one entitled "Autopsy," in which she examines Flanagan in a decidedly unmedical fashion, and "The Visible Man," detailing Flanagan's construction of an anatomically correct model representing his condition. The sequences were shot with the idea that they could be used both in Flanagan's presentations and Dick's documentary.

Sick was primarily photographed on Hi-8 with a Sony TR101 in a tableaux fashion, with the camera serving almost purely as a recording instrument. "Early on, I came in with a small ENG-style crew and we shot with Beta," Dick recalls, "but I primarily relied on the Hi-8 because I could basically take it anywhere I went with Bob and Sheree. People very quickly forgot about it being there. And Bob was a real performer; I could have filmed him doing anything. As I watched the footage, I realized that I never could have gotten this stuff while shooting in a more formal manner or on film. I believe that if you have compelling material, the format and image quality will not be an issue. As a result, I soon found myself working with just the Hi-8 camera and a sound person."

The filmmaker notes that his interest in minimalism — which he studied while at Cal Arts — bolstered this approach, as did Flanagan's own informal aesthetic.

Despite shooting *Sick* on small-format video, Dick always intended for the picture to be shown theatrically on film, as was his previous film, *Private Practices*. "That was shot on industrial 3/4-inch video," he recalls. "It was well-lit and everything, but people just laughed when I suggested that we go theatrical. The general consensus was, 'You'll never do anything with this.' But the material was so strong that people would watch regardless of the image quality."

The final cut of *Sick* was converted to 16mm film at DuArt Film and Video and then converted to 35mm at 4MC in Hollywood. "As far as shooting for the film transfer is concerned, I tended to frame more shots in close-ups, because that provides better resolution," Dick details. "Wider shots tended to go soft. But again, early on, I decided that the



material itself was more important than technical issues like lighting and picture quality. In fact, I knew that some people would think [the video look] was a great 'aesthetic' choice, and not just something I'd done because of the budget. I personally like the look of video on film, and I don't feel that video looks much different from film. Film doesn't look *better* than video. It's a different medium with different characteristics. When I see people championing film over video, it's usually an issue of nostalgia, which I hate."

With the exception of the collaborative vignettes and a few formal interview sessions, *Sick* was shot primarily with available light. While this choice was seemingly dictated simply by time and budgetary restraints, Dick maintains that it was also an aesthetic decision. He explains, "I didn't want Bob and Sheree to be seen in an obviously artificial [lighting] situation unless it was one of their own making, like during a performance or art exhibit. The audience had to experience them in very natural surroundings; otherwise, there could be this sense of distance, because most people's first reaction to their lifestyle would be to mentally distance themselves. We really had to fight against that. However, even in the staged sequences we tried to create atmospheric lighting, but nothing that would make things seem overtly strange or creepy.

"One definite cliché about sadomasochism — even among some who take part in it — is that it is about style and fantasy. That's fine, but that's not what Bob was into. He was interested in the experience of pain, not the theatrical side of this lifestyle. For example, Bob was preoccupied by the idea of force-feeding, as opposed to this menacing, dominatrix-in-leather image. The film had to reflect that."

Dick admits that sound recording was an inadequately planned aspect of the production, and that he relied far too heavily on the Hi-8 camera's built-in microphone. "If I was going to do this kind of shooting again," he begins, "I would work much more carefully, with radio mikes and other external systems. We got better at this [on *Sick*], but as it was, our rerecording mixer, Dane Davis, who also worked on *Boogie Nights*, spent eight days cleaning up our tracks. Otherwise, a lot of the film would have been unintelligible."

Additional material for *Sick* was culled from Rose's own video archives, also largely shot on Hi-8. Says Dick, "Sheree's footage was very interesting not only because of its intimate nature, but because she shoots without thinking about using the footage in some kind of edited, constructed manner. She likes the social dynamic of having a camera, which results in her getting shots that nobody else would; it's her natural reflex to film things. She not an operator at all, and her camera flies all over the place, but as I was editing, I really fell in love with what she'd captured."

The final cut of *Sick* incorporates footage from Beta, Hi-8, SVHS and standard VHS formats, but Dick decided that dropouts and other artifacts were not a concern. Once again, he determined that content overcame technical limitations. "We cleaned up a few things, but probably only five percent of what is there," he says. "In my experience, dropouts are a bigger fear than a reality. If you use good-quality tape, keep your equipment clean and have a good postproduction path, it's a minimal concern. Some people are obsessed with it, but audiences don't notice these things unless there is nothing else to capture their attention. Unless we had big dropout problems and they distracted from what was happening onscreen, I just didn't go to the trouble of fixing them.

"I do like the 'technician mentality' of doing things to the best of

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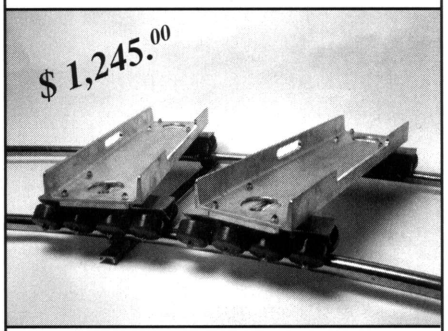
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your ability," he insists, "but I think [filmmakers] should focus on the story they're telling rather than trying to keep up with what is 'technically' perfect or state-of-the-art. Here I am saying this to *American Cinematographer*, but I really feel that one of the great problems with American film is the overemphasis on production values. It's the one thing that can be controlled and perfected, provided that you have enough money, but it's also the most *obvious* thing to get right. To be honest, I am sick of 'the beautiful image.' At this point, so what? And what is 'beautiful'? That can be anything. Also, when I consider the resources it takes to make some of these so-called 'beautiful' shots, I know I could make a whole film for what [other filmmakers] are spending. And a 'beautiful' shot can mean nothing if the content isn't there."

Dick credits co-editor/associate producer Dody Dorn with helping to shape the more than 100 hours of compiled footage into what would eventually become *Sick*. "The editor's passion has to match that of the director," Dick says, "and we had a very dynamic relationship." However, the duo's initial equipment was far from what one could describe as "dynamic." Dick recalls with a laugh, "I had an old VHS linear editing system that I did most of the rough-cut on. And one has to have a passion for and understanding of the material when cutting on a linear system. You have to really *meditate* on whether you want to take four hours to completely reassemble something if you want to change *one* cut. There's an agony about that process which makes it more like cutting on film; everything becomes more precious and precise. But I'd *never* do that again.

"Since I didn't have a script, I found that when I started creating certain dramatic arcs within the story, I was leaving out half the material. I therefore approached it again by cutting scenes as if they were stand-alone short films. I built 30 or 40 of these sequences and began piecing them together."

Dick did extensive audience testing with various assemblies of *Sick*, even though this practice is widely disdained by most filmmakers. "We found the testing to be vital," he attests. "We did small test screenings and let the conversations afterwards run for hours, looking for any comments that would help us focus the material. When we were later editing on an Avid system, we could then use our notes to create a new cut in about a week and do another screening. We did this about 10 times, only locking the picture after we had two consecutive screenings with no negative comments from the audience. I would do that with any feature; there's an intimacy about the process that I really enjoy."

Dick believes that *Sick* is best enjoyed in a theatrical setting. "People's apprehension and fears about what they might see in this film are always worse that what they ultimately do see," he reasons. "It's like going to the doctor's office to get a shot. There is so much buildup that it's almost anticlimactic, but at those [anticipated] points in the film you can see these people for who and what they are."

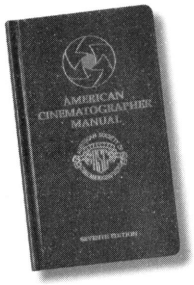
Asked if *Sick*'s often unsettling sadomasochistic imagery caused him to encounter any resistance from companies he dealt with during the film's production, Dick responds that it was largely a non-issue. "There *was* one company that agreed to work with us and then backed out at the last minute," he says. "I didn't make a big deal about it, but it incensed me that this same company would think nothing of contributing to some of the violent, regressive films that come out of Hollywood, while *Sick* is about integrity, bravery, and a loving, consensual relationship — it was completely hypocritical." ■

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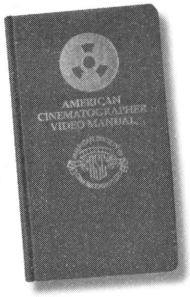
COMING ATTRACTIONS...REFLECTIONS

In 1998, the ASC Press will publish several new books, including *Reflections* by **Benjamin Bergery**, a book about cinematography for students, film professionals and cinema lovers. The book presents case studies of film lighting by some of the world's leading cinematographers: **Stephen Burum, ASC; Jordan Cronenweth, ASC; John Hora, ASC; Owen Roizman, ASC; Philippe Rousselot, Michel Hugo, ASC; Stephen Goldblatt, ASC; Steven Poster, ASC; Henri Alekan, Frederick Elmes, ASC; Tony Pierce-Roberts, Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC; Haskell Wexler, ASC; Laszlo Kovacs, ASC; Yves Angelo, Jack Green, ASC; Denis Lenoir, Raoul Coutard, Allen Daviau, ASC; Darius Khondji** and **Vittorio Storaro, ASC**. *Reflections* is a visual book about a visual art form. Every chapter is illustrated with reproductions of 35mm film frames. Most chapters cover workshop footage shot by a cinematographer and are accompanied by frames from timed workprints and lighting diagrams. Chapters about ***The Beauty and the Beast, Breathless, Fearless, Seven*** and ***The Last Emperor*** are presented with frames from selected sequences. Benjamin Bergery has a diverse background in film, video and technology. He has a BA from Saint John's College and a Masters of Science from MIT. After graduating he taught cinema vérité under the guidance of Richard Leacock. Benjamin has worked as a freelance documentary cameraman and as a video editor. His early video and interactive art earned him grants from the NEA and various Art Councils.



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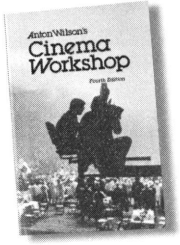


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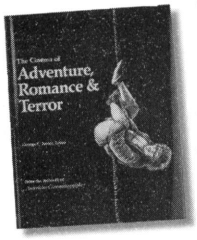
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Bride of Frankenstein: A Gothic Masterpiece

Director James Whale and an expert team of cinema artists defied the odds in creating a memorable sequel to one of the most famous monster movies of all time.

by Jan A. Henderson and George E. Turner



Drs. Frankenstein (Colin Clive, at left) and Pretorius (Ernest Thesinger) admire their latest creation (Elsa Lanchester). The petite actress had to walk on lifts for these scenes.

To a new world of gods and monsters!" toasts the mad Dr. Pretorius, triumphantly raising a beaker of gin. It is a legendary moment in *Bride of Frankenstein.*

On January 2, 1935, when production on the film began at Universal Studios, director James Whale should have offered the same toast to his collaborators — the writers, actors, cinematographers, designer, editor, makeup artists and composer. These were key figures in crafting this *Citizen Kane* of fantasy films.

Bride is a sequel to Universal's 1931 hit *Frankenstein.* The axiom that sequels are never as good as the originals generally holds true, but there are exceptions: *Tarzan and His Mate, After the Thin Man, From Russia With Love, The Godfather Part II* and *The Empire Strikes Back,* for example. It is widely conceded that *Bride* is one of these successes, although not everyone agrees. Even Whale and his star, Boris Karloff, preferred the original, which represented a crucial turning point in their careers. Karloff argued that it was a mistake in the sequel to have the Monster speak, that too much sympathy was built up for the Monster, and that the use of musical scoring was intrusive. *(Frankenstein* has often been criticized for its lack of music by modern writers who fail to consider that in 1931, background music was considered an outmoded artifact of the silent film era.) Some lovers of horror films prefer their horrors unleavened by humor.

After the success of *Frankenstein,* Universal quickly announced *The Return of Frankenstein* for the 1932-33 season. Whale was adamant that he wanted no part of the project. *The New Adventures of Frankenstein,* a treatment by a *Frankenstein* scenarist, Robert Florey, was rejected in February of 1932 by the youthful studio chief, Carl Laemmle, Jr. In 1933, director Kurt Neumann, a Laemmle protege from Germany, was put in charge of developing the project as a vehicle for Karloff and Bela Lugosi.



The blind hermit (O.P. Heggie) prays over his injured friend. When this scene fades to black, the crucifix remains onscreen.

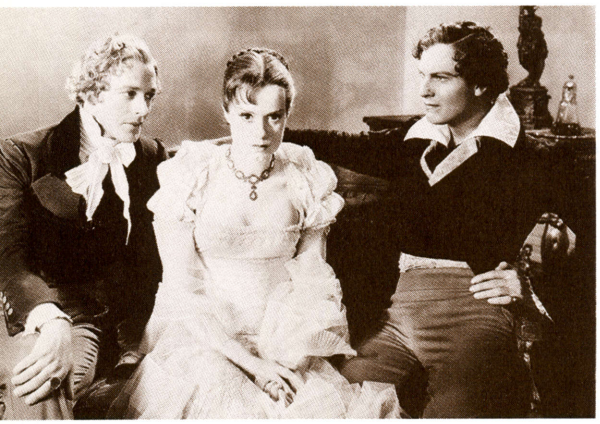
Scenario editor Tom Reed wrote another treatment, and Philip MacDonald, Edmund Pearson and Lawrence G. Blochman were among the distinguished authors who became involved. Playwright John L. Balderston, author of *Berkeley Square* and co-author of *Frankenstein,* created a prologue involving Mary and Percy Shelley and Lord Byron. The bulk of Balderston's treatment, in which the Bride is created from the oversized head of a circus freak and women's body parts rifled from train wrecks, was deemed too gruesome for consideration.

Meantime, numerous writers were trying unsuccessfully to deliver a satisfactory screenplay of H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man.* Whale persuaded Laemmle to offer the assignment to a friend of his in London, R. C. Sheriff, an Oxford don who had authored the successful play *Journey's End.* As planned, Whale asked to direct Sheriff's adaptation (arguably the finest fantasy script of the decade) instead of the *Frankenstein* project. He insisted that Junior Laemmle take the script home, and, after a good dinner, read it in its entirety. He was aware that this request would irritate Laemmle, who never worked after his evening meal. In his autobiography, *No Leading Lady,* Sheriff writes that Whale told him, "If they score a hit with a picture, they always want to do it again. They've got a perfectly sound commercial reason. *Frankenstein* was a gold mine at the box office, and a sequel to it is bound to win, however rotten it is. They've had a script made for a sequel, and it stinks to heaven. In any case, I squeezed the idea dry on the original picture, and never want to work on it again."

Whale would eventually relent, however. By early 1934, having made six successful movies *(The Impatient Maiden, The Old Dark*

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House, The Kiss Before the Mirror, The Invisible Man, By Candlelight and *One More River)*, the director had a change of heart. Assisted by Sheriff, he began preparing the *Frankenstein* sequel from scratch. Sheriff became homesick, and soon returned to Oxford. Whale then worked with Balderston and William Hurlbut, author of the play *Lilies of the Field.* Whale began casting the picture while the script was being written, and had alterations made to accommodate his actors of choice. Balderston angrily demanded that his name be removed from the screenplay, but was still given credit (with Hurlbut) for the adaptation.



Above: Percy Shelley (Douglas Walton), Mary Shelley (Elsa Lanchester) and Lord Byron (Gavin Gordon) ponder the fantastic in the film's prologue, during which Byron exclaims, "While the storm rages without, open up your pits of Hell!" Right: Cinematographer John Mescall, ASC and director James Whale examine Boris Karloff's stiff-legged stand-in while devising their lighting.

The script met with severe opposition from Joseph Breen, administrator of the Production Code. Whale wrote a solicitous letter assuring him that any depiction of necrophilia, gruesomeness and religious images would be modified to suit the demands of the Code.

Universal planned to reunite the principals from *Frankenstein,* but only the indispensable Karloff, Colin Clive and Dwight Frye were called. Frye was supposed to resume his role as Fritz, Dr. Frankenstein's half-witted, hunchbacked assistant. However, Whale departed from the script and cast Frye as Karl Glutz, the village murderer, and later sent Karl on Fritz's horrid errands. English actress Valerie Hobson, then 17, was given the former Mae Clarke role as Elizabeth. For the role of the blind hermit who befriends the Monster, Whale wanted Australian actor O. P. Heggie so badly that he rescheduled *Bride* so Heggie could finish a picture at RKO.

Karloff had reservations about reprising his most famous role. He rarely complained about the physical ordeals the part demanded, but in a 1958 radio interview with Clive Edwards in Carmel, California, he recalled the rigors of making the first film: "The makeup took about four hours to put on... I worked every day on the film, the film took eight weeks to make, and I remember one awful occasion when I got into the makeup shop at half past three in the morning, to be ready to go out on location...We worked in the hot sun at the edge of the lake, the scene with the little girl. We came back to the studio in the evening to have some supper, and we went out onto the backlot and I worked all night until five in the morning. I had the makeup on for 25 hours! That was a long pull. The carbon lights were dreadful. They hurt your eyes. The boots weighed about 16 pounds apiece. All told, the outfit weighed between 40 and 45 pounds." Acting in the costume further damaged Karloff's back, which he had injured years before as a laborer loading cement for Eastman Building Supply in Hollywood.

Claude Rains, Whale's star discovery from *The Invisible Man,* owed the studio a picture and was slated to play an eccentric new character, Dr. Septimus Pretorius. Instead, Rains was assigned to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* whereupon Whale sent word to England for an old friend from the London stage, Ernest Thesiger.

Phyllis Brooks, Arletta Duncan and international star Brigitte Helm were considered for the title role, but Whale brought in another Britisher for the part: Elsa Lanchester, the red-headed wife of Charles Laughton. A small but voluptuous woman with a fey kind of beauty and a ribald sense of humor, she also played the fragile Mary Shelley in the prologue. This was Whale's way of showing that even sweet Mary harbored a monster within. Whale and Thesiger designed the makeup for the Monstress, basing the idea upon the famed sculpture of Egyptian Queen Nefertiti, with long hair streaming upward. Jack Pierce brought the concept to life. The Bride initially seems beautiful, but her eccentric animation, stitched-together neck, and uncouth screams and hisses quickly dispel this impression.

From Dublin's Abbey Players came tiny, birdlike Una O'Connor, whose piercing shrieks echo through *The Invisible Man,* to play the even noisier Minnie.

The sequel uses its predecessor as a springboard in bringing forth several latent ideas from Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's original 1818 novel, and develops unpredictable new angles. Whale's penchant for black humor, which sur-





Left: A butler (Lucien Prival) tries to comfort Elizabeth (Valerie Hobson) after the supposed death of her fiance. When the body arrives in the scene, the shoes of the peasants carrying it squeak noisily on the castle floor. Below: After discovering the Monster (Karloff) in the cistern below the burned mill, Hans (Reginald Barlow) meets a horrible fate.

faced sparsely in the 1931 film and was developed with increasing sophistication in *The Old Dark House* (1932) and *The Invisible Man* (1933), is pushed to the limit in *Bride,* transforming what could have been a downbeat narrative into a multilayered entertainment.

Bride of Frankenstein begins in 1818, after the publication of *Frankenstein.* In a storm-buffeted castle, where Percy and Mary Shelley and Lord Byron are discussing her book, Mary moves the plot forward: at the burning mill, Minnie, the Frankensteins' maid, leads the crowd in celebration. The burgomaster orders Henry Frankenstein's body borne home and shoos everyone away, but Hans and his wife, the parents of a child drowned by the Monster, remain. Searching the ruins, Hans falls into the cistern beneath. The Monster, emerging from the shadows, drowns him and hurls his wife into the pit. The Monster then encounters Minnie, who runs screaming to the castle. Upstairs, the ailing Baron Frankenstein dies, but it is discovered that Henry is alive.

The convalescing Henry is visited by his former university professor, Dr. Pretorius, who wants Henry to help him "probe the secrets of life and death and reach a goal undreamed of by science." Taking Henry to his rooms, he shows him seven humanlike creatures less than one foot tall, which he "grew, as nature does, from seed." Henry wants no more of "this hell's spawn," but is intrigued when Pretorius suggests that they create a woman.

The Monster, wandering the woods, startles a shepherdess, who falls into a pool. He rescues her, but her screams attract two hunters, who shoot him in the arm. He flees, but is captured by a mob and chained in a dungeon. The Monster quickly breaks free and smashes through two heavy doors as the villagers run away. He rampages, killing men, women and children. In the forest, he enters the cabin of an elderly blind hermit, who treats him kindly and invites him to stay. As weeks pass, the Monster's friend teaches him to talk, but hunters eventually arrive and try to kill the creature.

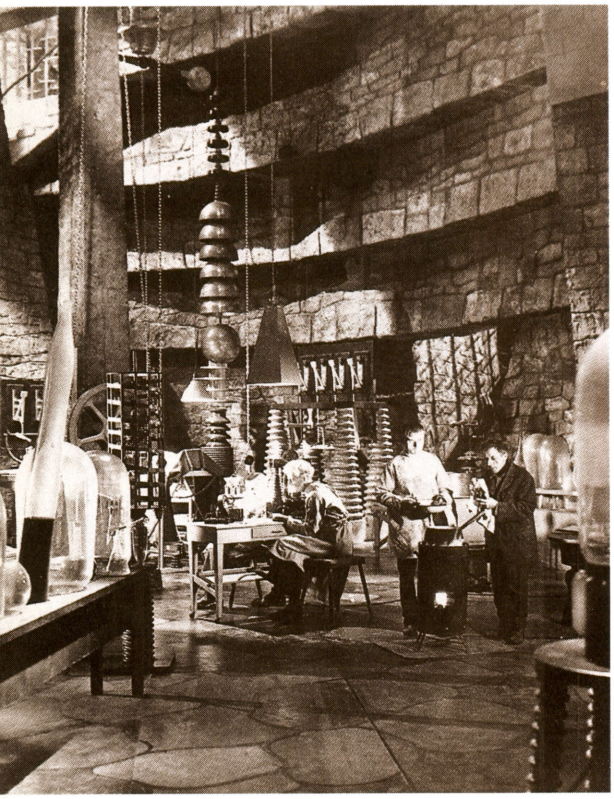
With another mob at his heels, the Monster stumbles into an underground crypt, where he sees Pretorius and his helpers open the coffin of a young woman. Pretorius remains and unpacks his lunch. When the Monster emerges, Pretorius welcomes him, gives him food, wine and a cigar, and says he wants to create a mate for him. When Henry refuses to help, the Monster kidnaps Elizabeth, Henry's bride. Pretorius says she will be returned when the experiment is completed.

In the watchtower where the Monster was created, Henry, Pretorius and two murderers, Karl and Ludwig, work feverishly on the new creation. Karl murders a young woman to procure a stronger heart. The Monster, enraged at being put



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off, throws Karl from the tower. Meanwhile, the female creature comes to life. When the Monster approaches her, she screams in terror. Filled with sadness, he sends Henry and Elizabeth away, then pulls the lever that will blow the tower to bits. Pretorius and the Monsters are buried in a series of explosions.



Frankenstein, Pretorius, Karl (Dwight Frye) and Ludwig (Ted Billings) toil away in the watchtower lab.

Whale retained most of the religious imagery that had worried Breen. The captured Monster, raised aloft on a pole and pelted by rocks, obviously symbolizes crucifixion. Additionally, a crucifix in the hermit's cabin is heavily emphasized; the Monster angrily topples a statue of a bishop; and Pretorius impiously quotes Biblical phrases ("Male *and* female created He them. Be fruitful and multiply."). Elizabeth tells Henry that his thoughts are "blasphemous and wicked." While these touches are much commented upon by historians, no one has explained why Pretorius dons a yarmulke before unveiling his miniature creatures.

Bride of Frankenstein was entirely made on the Universal lot, allowing the designers to create a world of their own. With the exception of the street scenes in the backlot village, everything was filmed on soundstages. Charles D. Hall's settings are vividly atmospheric, with exteriors suggestive of Gustave Dore's demonic woodcuts. Hall expanded the scope of the burning windmill and the watchtower laboratory from *Frankenstein* enormously, and redressed the crypt from *Dracula.* Among the more impressive sets are a blasted forest with towering, limbless trees and strange rock outcroppings, a waterfall and pool in a verdant forest, a peasant hut in the tradition of Grimm's Fairy Tales, and a hillside graveyard studded with leaning monuments. These "exteriors" are backed by gigantic sky cycloramas. The roof of the watchtower was filmed against a black backing so that a roiling, lightning-streaked sky could be matted in.

The grandest interior is the new version of Castle Frankenstein, which includes a huge central hall with groined arches and tall pillars, and large rooms with vaulted ceilings, ornate windows, heroic tapestries and massive furnishings. The laboratory is supposedly the one in which the Monster was created, but it is actually much larger — 70 feet high — and more elaborate than the original setting. The refurbished space is filled with fantastic machinery created by Kenneth Strickfaden, the electronics genius who had furnished the lab equipment for *Frankenstein.* Another key set is a vaulted underground dungeon where the Monster is shackled to a massive chair while villagers peer down from a street-level window. Other impressive sets include the cistern and waterwheel underneath the mill, the crowded interior of the hermit's hut, Pretorius' strange apartment, a mountain cave, a morgue, a courtroom and village homes.

The cinematography of John Mescall, ASC highlights sets and players to maximum effect. He worked well with Whale on five movies (including *By Candlelight* and *One More River*), setting up rapidly and never troubling the director with trivial details. In the village scenes, he captures the ambience of an inbred community with a disproportionate share of demented misfits. As Mary Shelley begins her story, the camera dollies away swiftly. Several times the camera follows action past walls. The Monster and Pretorius are often shot from low angles to make them seem abnormally tall. During the creation sequence, the scientists' fanaticism is emphasized by the rampant light on their faces and a succession of oblique camera angles.

Universal executives were concerned about Mescall's participation in the project because the cameraman was a chronic alcoholic. Apparently, his artistry did not suffer when he was drinking; the problem was getting him to and from work. During the 1940s he was often replaced after failing to report for duty, yet earned a Best Black-and-White Cinematography Academy Award nomination in 1942 for *Take a Letter, Darling.* Although he made no secret of his addiction, Mescall had a distinguished career and was also a world-class golfer. He lived his last years in obscurity.

Special effects photographer John P. Fulton, ASC also lent his talents to the show. A Swedish-American from Nebraska, John was the son of matte artist Fitch Fulton; he had worked on all of Whale's Universal pictures. He often argued violently with studio bosses, directors and cinematographers. Aided by David S. Horsley's optical photography and Charlie Baker's miniatures, Fulton created unprecedented effects for *Bride.* The picture's miniatures — the mountain castle of the prologue, the burning windmill and the watchtower — are excellent. The destruc-

tion of the tower is fully convincing due to detailed construction with individual building stones, masterful lighting, controlled pyrotechnics and high-speed photography.

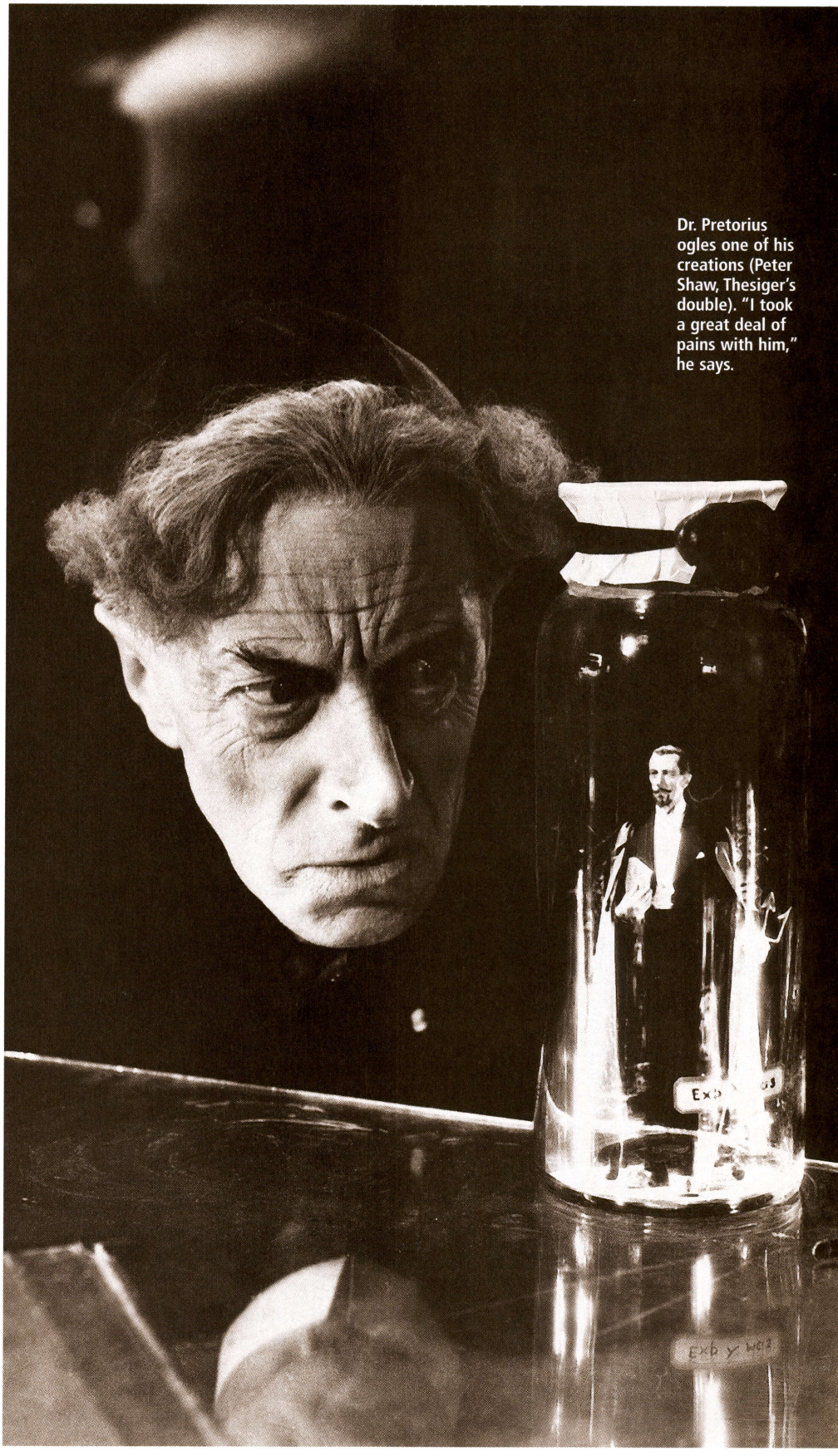
Virtuoso effects depict Pretorius' seven miniature homunculi in their glass jars. Fulton and Horsley were on the set for two days during live-action filming. Careful measurements were made of camera elevations, distances and angles, as well as the sizes of the jars and other props. The little people — a queen, a king, a bishop, a ballet dancer, a baby, a devil who resembles Pretorius, and a mermaid — were photographed separately in large-scale jars and matted into the small jars. The composites are flawless, including a scene in which the king escapes and Pretorius picks him up by the scruff of the neck and pops him into a jar.

Matte paintings adding scope to the village were provided by Jack Cosgrove, ASC and Russell Lawson, ASC.

Karloff's Monster makeup, again created by Jack Pierce, was similar to the first film's, with additional burn damage. Early in production, Karloff fell in the windmill cistern, dislocated his hip, and was heavily bandaged for the rest of the film. His performance is magnificent both in pantomime and in his limited dialogue scenes. No other actor has grasped the full potential of the role.

Colin Clive, the perfect Henry Frankenstein, is supposed to be in feeble health in the sequel and is therefore less dynamic than before, yet his nervous tension is shattering and overtones of tragedy hover around him. It wasn't all make-believe; Clive was an ill and desperately unhappy man, afflicted with acute alcoholism which led to his death at the age of 37.

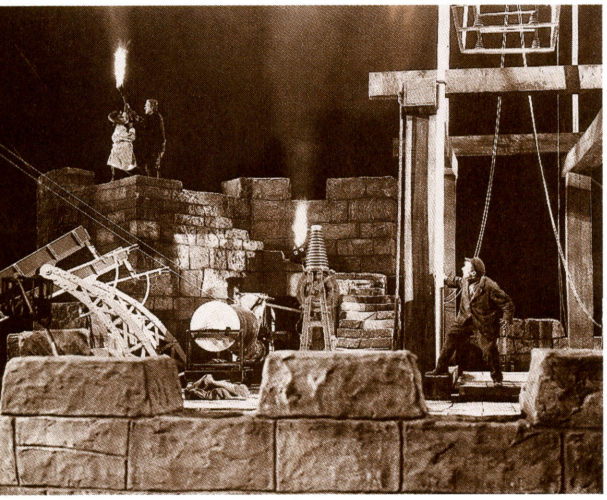
As Pretorius, the tall, skeletal Thesiger delivered a singular characterization that even Rains could hardly have surpassed. In 1932, Whale had brought Thesiger to



Dr. Pretorius ogles one of his creations (Peter Shaw, Thesiger's double). "I took a great deal of pains with him," he says.

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America to portray the acerbic, effeminate Horace Femm in *The Old Dark House.* Pretorius is a hardier extension of Femm — bitchy, unpredictable and disdainful of women, his haughtiness emphasized by a uniquely sculpted nose. He is alternately hilarious and horrifying. Writers for years have pigeonholed Pretorius as gay; whether Whale envisioned him as such is debatable.



Karl and the Monster struggle atop of the watchtower as Ludwig observes from a safe distance. In the movie, a lightning-slashed sky is matted in.

Thesiger got most of the film's best lines, many of them improvised on the set. Pretorius bombards Henry with these bon mots, which are scattered throughout the film like Oscar Wilde epigrams: "I also have created life, as they say, in God's own image." "Sometimes I think it would be better if we were all devils, with no nonsense about angels and being good." "The creation of life is enthralling, distinctly enthralling, is it not?" "Leave the charnel house and follow the lead of nature — or God, if you like your Bible stories." As the great experiment begins, he exults, "Once we should have been burnt as wizards for this experiment!" Leading his entourage into the watchtower, he tells them to "Mind the steps — a bit slimy, I expect. I think it's a charming house." To the Monster's line "I love dead, hate living," he sniffs, "You're wise in your generation."

The company was a pleasant one. The English players had tea every afternoon, to the consternation of studio watchdogs. According to Elsa Lanchester, however, "Whale seemed to be jealous of all the attention Karloff got, and referred to him as 'that truck driver.'" Many publicity photos show the normally aloof Whale hamming it up on the set, upstaging his star.

While *Bride* was in production, Stuart Walker was directing *Werewolf of London* on a nearby stage. Both were closed sets. A corridor was built to accommodate Valerie Hobson, who was in both pictures. Cortlandt Hull, great-nephew of Henry Hull, star of *Werewolf,* tells of an amusing incident: "Henry's wife came to visit him on the set, and she was directed to the *Bride* set by mistake. A technician told her, 'You don't have to go around the buildings. There's a connecting corridor between the two stages.' The corridor was dimly lit. As she proceeded toward the other end, she heard 'thump! thump! thump!' Halfway through, she saw Boris Karloff coming down the corridor in full Frankenstein makeup, smoking a cigar. As they met, he said, 'Good morning, Mrs. Hull.' She shrieked, *'Aiee! Aiee! Aiee!'* She knew Boris, but in the dark corridor she didn't recognize him."

Franz Waxman's score for *Bride* is a classic example of music being as important as visuals for setting the tone of a fantasy. The picture looks and sounds much like a Wagnerian opera, aglow with visual and sonic grandeur. Recently arrived from Germany, Waxman met Whale at a party where the director said to him, "Nothing will be resolved in this picture, except the end destruction scene. Will you create an unresolved score for it?" Waxman watched much of the shooting and created leitmotifs for the major characters. The three-note stanza from the "Bride" theme resembles "Bali Ha'i" in Richard Rodgers' later *South Pacific.* The score contains a minuetto for the prologue, a *marche funebre,* a pastorale, much exciting chase music, a triumphal march, a bone-rattling crypt sequence, the long creation sequence (now in the symphonic repertoire), and much atmospheric music. It was performed by Mischa Bakaleinikoff with a mere 22-piece orchestra, yet it is so ingeniously orchestrated that the lack of instrumental heft goes unnoticed.

Production wrapped on March 7, 1935, after running 10 days over schedule. The final cost was $397,023, more than $100,000 over budget. Much trimming followed, reducing the final cut from 92 to 75 minutes. Excised were the court hearing, a sequence in the morgue, a subplot in which Karl murders his miserly uncle and lets the Monster get the blame, and numerous bits of mayhem. A brief sequence wherein the Monster encounters a Gypsy family was inserted to cover these deletions. The prologue was pruned drastically to delete racy dialogue about past escapades.

Bride opened at the Hollywood Pantages and the New York Roxy. It got great reviews and made a lot of money, although less than *Frankenstein.* After looking at this marvelous film, one might wonder how many Oscars it earned. It was nominated only for sound recording — and lost to MGM's *Naughty Marietta.*

Many have dreamed of restoring the film to its preview length. Universal Home Video technical director Ron Roloff recalls, "In 1985, because of the success of the videos of the restored *Frankenstein,* MCA made a worldwide search for any prints of *Bride* that might exist. It drew a blank. In 1992 it was rumored that the Library of Congress had unearthed a complete nitrate print that had been copyrighted in 1934. Before these rumors started, we had the print measured and compared it to what we had on the lot, and they

were the same."

The dream persists. *Bride* is not perfect — no movie is. But perfection can be a liability. Instead, what we have is a frightening, funny and touching film.

Credits

Carl Laemmle *presents a* Universal *picture; a* James Whale *production; produced by* Carl Laemmle Jr.; *directed by* James Whale; *screenplay by* William Hurlbut; *based on the novel by* Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley *and adapted by* William Hurlbut *and* John L. Balderston; *art director,* Charles D. Hall; *director of photography,* John J. Mescall, ASC; *special effects,* John P. Fulton, ASC; *music by* Franz Waxman; *orchestra conductor,* Mischa Bakaleinikoff; *film editor,* Ted Kent; *sound recording,* Gilbert Kurland; *makeup artist,* Jack P. Pierce; *associate,* Otto Lederer; *assistant directors,* Harry Mancke, Joseph McDonough, Fred Frank; *contributing writers,* Philip MacDonald, Tom Reed, Edmund Pearson; *supervising editor,* Maurice Pivar; *special electrical effects,* Kenneth Strickfaden, Raymond Lindsay, Frank Graves; *second cameraman,* Alan C. Jones; *assistant cameraman,* William Dodds; *optical effects,* David S. Horsley, ASC; *orchestrations,* Clifford Vaughn; *organist,* Charles Wolcott; *matte paintings,* Russell A. Lawson, ASC *and* Jack Cosgrove, ASC; *miniatures,* Charlie Baker; *unit sound mixer,* William Hedgecock; *re-recording and sound effects,* Ed Wetzel; *music recording,* Lawrence Aicholtz; *continuity clerk,* Flo Brummel; *production secretary,* Buddy Daggett; Western Electric *recording; Running time 92 minutes at preview, 75 minutes in release. Released April 22, 1935.*

The Monster, Boris Karloff; *Henry Frankenstein,* Colin Clive; *Elizabeth,* Valerie Hobson; *Dr. Pretorius,* Ernest Thesiger; *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley,* Elsa Lanchester; *Lord Byron,* Gavin Gordon; *Percy Bysshe Shelley,* Douglas Walton; *Minnie,* Una O'Connor; *Burgomaster,* E. E. Clive; *Butler,* Lucien Prival; *Hermit,* O. P. Heggie; *Karl,* Dwight Frye; *Hans,* Reginald Barlowe; *Hans' Wife,* Mary Gordon; *Shepherdess,* Ann Darling; *Ludwig,* Ted Billings; *The Monster's Mate,* Elsa Lanchester; *Uncle Glutz,* J. Gunnis Davis; *Auntie Glutz,* Tempe Pigott; *Rudi,* Neil Fitzgerald; *Priest,* Lucio Villegas; *Convent Girl,* Helen Parrish; *Hunter,* Robert A'dair; *Second Hunter,* Jack Curtis; *Hunters at Cabin,* John Carradine, Frank Terry; *Neighbor,* Walter Brennan; *Coroner,* Edward Mordant; *Marta,* Sarah Schwartz; *Servants,* Joseph North, Harry Northrup; *Guard,* Charles Murphy; *Neighbor,* Mary Stewart; *Gypsy,* Maurice Black; *Gypsy Grandmother,* Elspeth Dudgeon; *Mother,* Brenda Fowler; *Little King,* A. S. Byron; *Little Queen,* Joan Woodbury; *Little Archbishop,* Norman Ainsley; *Little Devil,* Peter Shaw; *Little Ballerina,* Kansas DeForest; *Little Mermaid,* Josephine McKim; *Little Baby,* Billy Barty; *Villagers,* D'Arcy Corrigan, Edward Piel, Sr., Frank Benson, Anders Van Haden, Rollo Lloyd, John George, Grace Cunard, Murdock MacQuarrie, Peter Bronte, Leah Lewis, Gene Garrick; *Double for Byron,* Monte Montague; *Double for Thesiger,* Peter Shaw; *Double for Barlow,* George DeNormand.

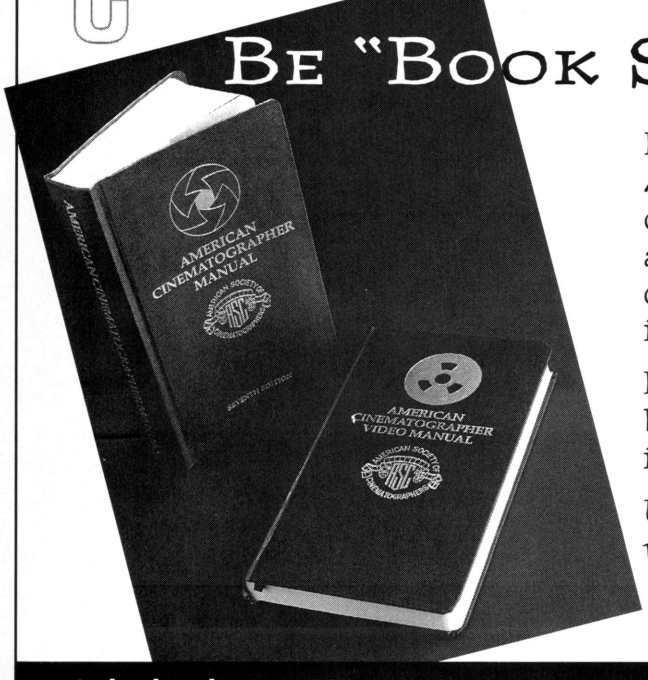
Thanks to Cortlandt Hull, Ron Roloff, and the late John P. Fulton, ASC, David S. Horsley, ASC, J. U. Miller, and Harry Wolf, ASC. ■

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On the Spot

The Pre-Light Payoff

by Mary Hardesty

Veteran cameraman Peter James, ASC, ACS, CSC (*Driving Miss Daisy*, *Diabolique*) recently tried out his new, improved way of shooting a starfield in a spot for Dynamic Mutual Funds.

By convincing Echo Advertising and Avion Films to pay for a prep day to pre-light the 30-second commercial, James got the necessary shots and also saved the client some capital. "A pre-light day always looks expensive up front, but in reality it's the cheapest money they'll ever spend, since having to pay the crew for just one hour of overtime during production would pay for it," he observes. "Unfortunately, many producers hope that they can squeeze in the pre-lighting during the shoot so they won't have to pay for another day and make their budget look bad. I say, 'Give us a half day to pre-light and we can save you four hours of overtime pay — along with possibly thousands of dollars while you sit around waiting for some effect to be fixed in post that could have already been done, had we been given the prep day.'"

In this case, the producer and the agency agreed to spend the additional money prior to the shoot so that James could pre-light a giant map filled with hundreds of lights, each one representing a city with a Dynamic Mutual Funds' office. "Starfields are notoriously difficult to produce," states James. "We used red Christmas tree lights for the major cities. To create a starfield as a background, we drilled holes in the map for little white Christmas tree lights and placed tracing paper behind the holes in front of the lights, so the 'stars' wouldn't be too bright. We put these lights on a dimmer switch with random programming so the 'stars' would get brighter and then dimmer. They never went completely black, because real stars ordinarily never go out."

Director Eugene Beck's vision for the Dynamic spot, titled "Global Value Investing," was to have energetic, quick cuts from a team of workers in an office (the map room) to a team of rowers on a mist-shrouded lake. "He wanted the office to have a war-room feel to it," recalls James, who used some smoke for the spot. "We went for a futuristic, *Batman*-type look, but we still wanted to keep an office feel, so we didn't use shafts of light. For naturalistic light, I used the map as the main backlight, and utilized fake computer screens with their own lights inside and half-blue gels on the screens to cast a cool blue glow on the actors' faces. The set was painted in medium gray tones, so it wasn't intrusive. Eugene wanted the people and the huge map to be the heroes."

Director Beck had storyboarded the office shot to complement the shots of the rowers. Overhead vistas of workers clustered around computer terminals were matched up with overhead shots of the boat crew. "We had the camera pulling back as some workers joined others at a light table, and then cut to the crew coming in underneath the camera and rowing away from the camera," explains James, who used an Arriflex III camera mounted on a Cartoni Head atop an O'Connor dutching plate. "We always wanted the camera moving in some way or another."

"For the rowing scenes we used a 150-600mm Canon zoom lens, and shot the action during sunrise and sunset," recalls James. "While waiting for the sunset, we did all of the close-up shots of the logos and the crew. I used

Kodak's Vision 250D (5246) stock outside, which meant we shot at a very high exposure of 22 or more even with filters. Normally, I would shoot at 32 or 45 because of the sun, but I went with the high exposure because I wanted to get a huge depth of field and didn't want everyone out of focus."

To enhance the look of shots on the lake, James used a few grad filters and Pola screens on the rowers and sky, and tried to keep plenty of yellows in the scene. This approach was selected for its contrast with the coolness of the scenes in the office, which were shot with a 5:1 Cooke zoom on Kodak's Vision 500T (5279) emulsion, and lit with tungsten light fixtures. "I tried to let the natural colors of the sunset come through and, when we did the close-up work, we didn't have to change the color of the filter, because we were able to get the flesh tones warm enough by simply using mirrors."

While the weather proved ideal for the two-day shoot, James did have something of a struggle with his simulated fog. "We wanted to show the boats paddling out of a fog bank and rowing into the sunset — all in backlight. We put several boats with smoke pots onboard at various points in the water," says James, who always finds it challenging to lay down a wall of "fog" which looks consistent from take to take.

For close-ups of the rowers' faces, their boat was tied to the dock and the blades were removed from the oars. "We used 4"x 4" mirrors on reflectors — one mirror for each actor in the boat — to light them on the same side the sun was lighting them," continues James, who positioned the light to give a hard kick on the rowers' shoulders and legs. "That way, we could see their muscles straining and working. We also got tight shots of the crews' shirts and the oar handles, which had the company logo on them. We ran the camera at 96 fps to slow the action down enough so the logo wouldn't strobe. We knew the logo would be on the screen for less than two seconds, so it had to be legible. These logo close-ups were then

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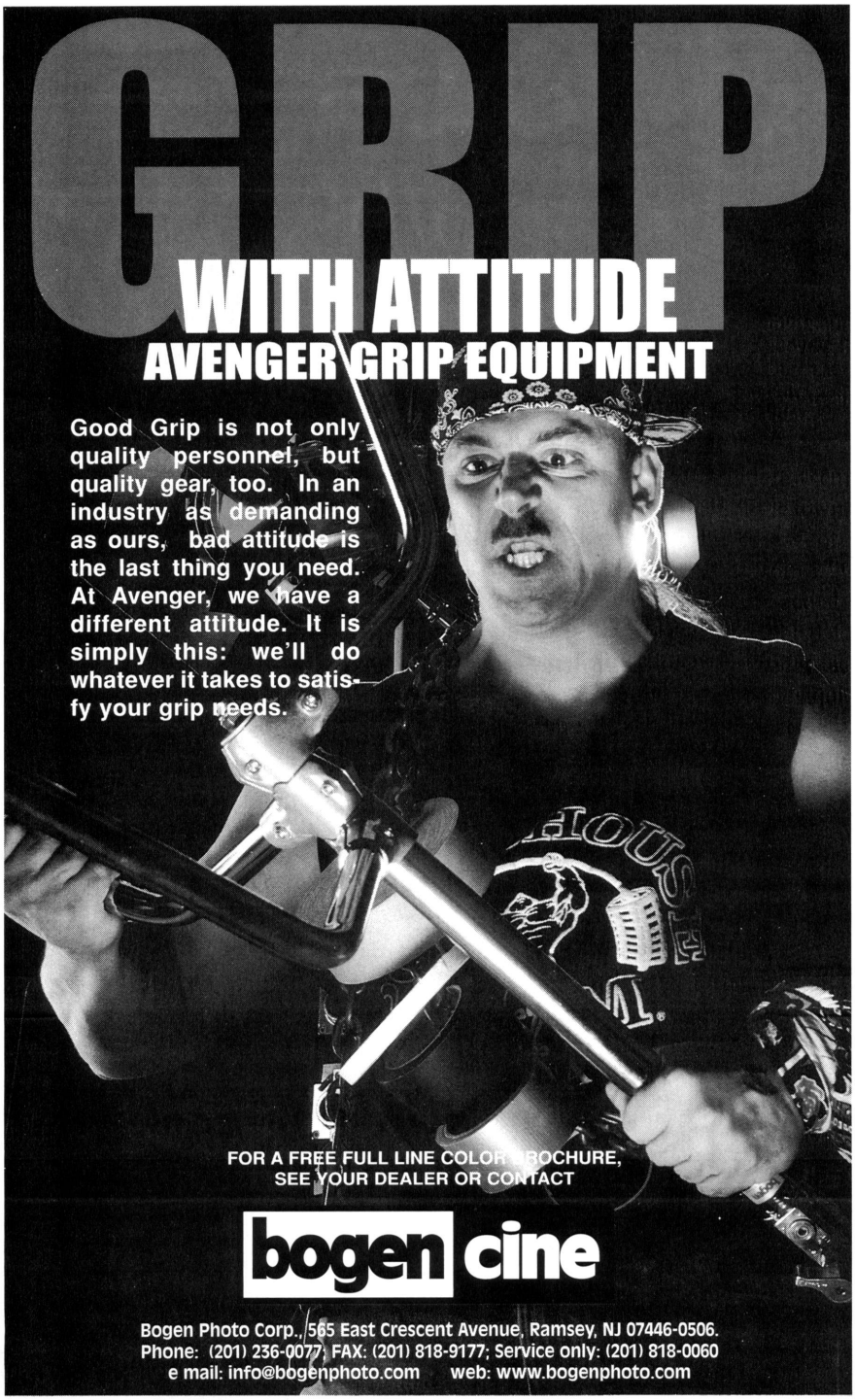
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intercut with the same logo on file folders in the office scene to keep a continuous flow throughout the spot."

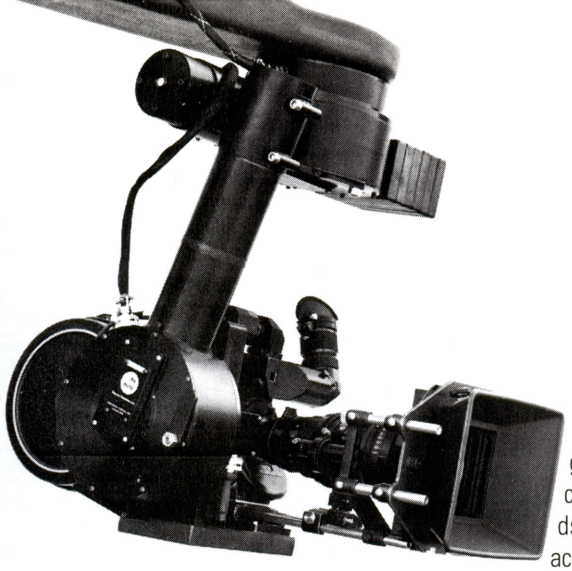
James had been hired due to his vast experience with expansive sets and big-scale features. Coincidentally, he had spent many summers on the same Canadian lake used as the location. "They weren't aware of it when they hired me, but I've spent summers on that lake for the last 12 years, so I knew it really well. I had also shot a lot of commercials in Canada for different airlines and beer companies, as well as spots for the Ontario Tourism Department."

Though James built his reputation as a top commercial director while living in Toronto, his background is in documentary and short films. "I would spend summers and autumns in Toronto shooting commercials, and then shoot features in Australia during the winter and spring months," explains James. "I find that the two forms cross-pollinate each other, but the trick lies in learning ways to shortcut great feature lighting techniques to make them work for commercials."

James' next feature, due out this spring from 20th Century Fox, is director Richard Linklater's 1920s period piece *The Newton Boys,* which will be covered in an upcoming issue of *AC.* ■

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New Products

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson

Digital Remote Head

Weaver/Steadman introduces its new digital, servo-driven, handwheel operated remote head for film and video cameras. Like the W/S fluid head, the dsRemote is a rigid and compact system; its modular design and tube frame construction allow flexibility to configure the system for maximum motion in tight shooting situations. This head is also adept at managing full-size camera packages when performing extreme tilts and low angles.

A single 100' umbilical cable connects the head to the controller, carrying lines for servo and camera power, lens control, serial communications and three video feeds. A total of 120 signal-quality slip rings simplify and stabilize current flow for fully revolving motion. The head itself provides isolated power to the camera rated at 12V and 15V — 15 amps each — integrated for 24-30V operation. (This easily powers cameras like the Arri 435 and 535 at full speed.) The dsRemote runs on twin 24V batteries and 110-240V AC power integrated in the compact controller case.

The dsRemote's user-friendly computer controls allow the operator to customize handwheel operation and head motion. In addition to adjusting the head's rotational speed, handwheel direction, and limiting the distance the head can travel on an axis, the nonlinear speed control can be activated when a wide range of velocity is required. The computer's correcting control is extremely valuable for smoothing camera motion when vibration or motion is generated by an unstable crane or jib arm platform. dsRemote's computer also accurately records in real time up to 30 minutes of individually numbered discreet recordings.

Weaver/Steadman (310) 829-3296, fax (310) 828-5935.

Underwater Camera

Plus 8 Video announces for rental its Amphibico VH-1000 marine video housing for Sony's DCR-VX1000 video camcorder, which is ideal for any wet situation that might endanger a camera. Designed for professional underwater use, the cast and machined Amphibico housing provides waterproof electronic push button controls that give the operator full camera menu and operational control — with or without gloves. The housing itself is safety-sealed with secured latches.



The viewfinder has X2 magnification, adjustable focus and is tilted 20 degrees for full-frame viewing through a face mask. The lens system is marine bayonet-mounted with a 0.55X rectilinear, full-coat amphibious conversion lens which is vacuum-sealed for maximum anti-fog protection. This includes a square lens hood complete with 3" x 4' (76mm x 101mm) filter slot; sharp focus to 1/2" (1.3mm) of lens; and full telephoto zoom to within 18" (450mm) with the zoom capable to 74-degree wide-angle coverage with no vignetting of the lens.

The light and portable set weighs 15.5 pounds dry or about one pound in sea water — remove the ballast and it floats. The unit also has good underwater balance and is highly maneuverable. Available for rent with or without VX-1000 PAL or NTSC camera, other rental options include mini-underwater lights and power pack, a 4" high performance LCD color screen with brightness control on a ball joint swivel mount, and a pluggable underwater mini-connector for use with a surface video umbilical or underwater camera monitor.

Plus 8 Video in Burbank (818) 845-6480 or West L.A. (310) 442-4712.

Widescreen Digital Video Camera

Sony Electronics presents the new DXC-D30WS digital video camera, which offers 16:9 and 4:3 aspect ratio and docks with several digital videotape formats; the camera also docks to all current Sony analog formats. The camera is targeted for high-end business and industrial video production houses as well as small to mid-sized broadcast and cable television stations.

This unit is a versatile digital camera head that docks to component analog (Betacam SP), 4:1:1 digital (DVCAM) or 4:2:2 digital widescreen (Betacam SX) SDTV formats. In low-light situations, the DXC-D30WS offers 0.5 lux at f1.4, a typical signal-to-noise ratio of 63dB and a sensitivity of f11 at 2000 lux. Further, the camera supports the ClipLink system, which allows users to create index pictures while shooting with Sony's DSR-1 DVCAM recorder;

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these index pictures facilitate drag-and-drop editing using the EditStation non-linear editing station.

The camera's acquisition system includes three two-third inch IT PowerHAD WS CCD chips. Output formats include VBS, Y/R-Y/B-Y, RGB and YC via a pro 76-pin digital 4:2:2 10-bit or pro 50-pin analog connector. Other I/Os include BNC and RCA phono-type monitor output, a 12-pin lens connector, a DIN 8-pin and 20-pin viewfinder connector as well as a stereo mini and 10-pin remote connector.

Supplied accessories include a tripod plate, remote ClipLink control, external microphone and a widescreen electronic viewfinder. Optional accessories include a two-thirds inch format internal focus 18x lens, a triax system camera control unit and a host of video cassette recorders including the DSR-1 DVCAM digital video cassette recorder, the DNV-5 Betacam SX recorder, the PVV-3 Betacam SP recorder and the BVV-5 Betacam SP recorder.

Sony, (800) 686-SONY.

Electronic Cinematography Lens

Fujinon introduces its new wide power lens — the A10X4.8B-10 — which is designed for use on the latest electronic cinematography cameras. This lens features a 90 degree horizontal field of view in the 16:9 format, and more than 85 degrees in the 4:3 format with less than one percent distortion at a wide angle; it also has a two-foot M.O.D. that is measured from the object plane.

The lens has additional end user benefits including a newly designed inner focusing system that reduces image size change to a minimum when focusing; zoom and focus gearing that accommodates most cine-style controls; and large orange numerals for focal length and T-stop which are visible from both sides of the lens.

The A 10X4.8B-10 also has a focal length of 4.8 to 48mm; an f-number of 1.8 from 4.8 to 34mm, and 2.3 at 48mm; and T-numbers of 2 from 4.8 to 34mm, and 2.5 at 48mm. In addition,

Fujinon's A10X4.8B-10 wide power cine-style lens also features a compact design (244.4mm) and light weight (1.4kg).

Fujinon, (800) 553-6611.

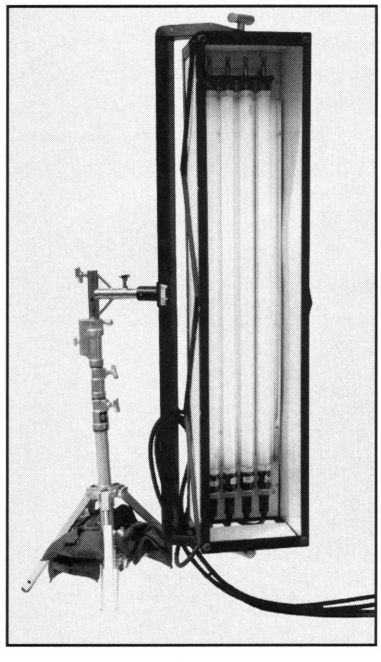
15X Zoom Lens

Beaulieu introduces a service for fitting a high-quality Angenieux zoom lens that goes from a true 6mm ultra wide-angle through to a full 90mm telephoto setting. This new lens can be retrofitted to either the Beaulieu model 6008 or 7008 Super 8 cameras. The price for the lens depends upon the exchange of your existing Angenieux zoom so that the aperture and iris control motors can be used in conjunction with the revised lens.

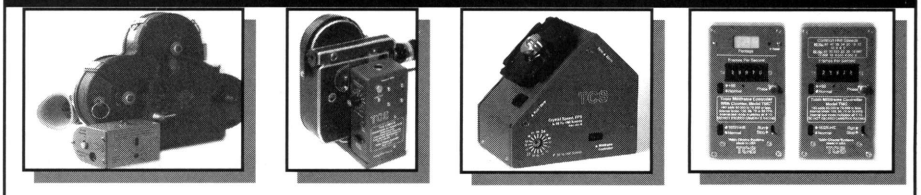
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Underwater Fluorescent Fixtures

HydroFlex introduces the new HydroFlow line of underwater fluorescent lighting. Utilizing industry-standard Kino Flo flicker-free ballasts, HydroFlex offers 2' and 4' underwater fluorescent fixtures for any wet or submerged application to a depth of 100'. The sources may be used individually, handheld or hard-mounted with simple-to-attach



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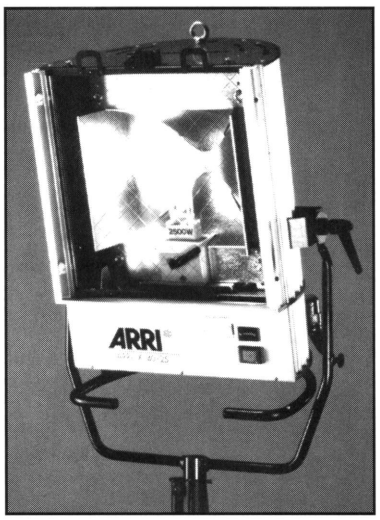
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weight cuffs. The lamps can also be grouped in banks of 4 or 8 in underwater soft boxes to provide a soft key or fill source.

For "practical" use, the fixtures may be used with a variety of patterned masks, coverings and mounts. The lights are also available with custom UV transmitting tubes to facilitate the production of ultraviolet effects. Power distribution for the Four-Bank Soft Boxes has been simplified by using a single 16-gauge conductor cable that breaks out into 4-conductor connectors at its end.

HydroFlex (310) 301-8187, Fax (310) 821-9886, e-mail: h2opros@hydroflex.com.



New Arri Sources

Arriflex now offers the ARRI X 40/25 daylight wide angle floodlight which accommodates either 4000W or 2500W single-ended HMI lamps; an adjustment knob facilitates the switching of lamp wattage. Its 129 degree beam angle makes it useful as a bounce light and for down lighting backgrounds; at 15' the source covers an area of 60' x 60' and more than 333 footcandles. It also features two easily exchanged reflectors: the standard reflector provides the highest output and a smooth even field; the matte black reflector is best used when clean hard shadows are desired. Additional accessories include light and heavy diffusion glass, barndoors and filter frames.

The company also introduces its new 150W Fresnel which can be used for either location or studio use and can be operated with either a 100W or 150W tungsten lamp. The 150W lamphead is almost half the weight of the 300W Fresnel and one about one-third its size; the lens is approximately 50mm.

Arriflex (818) 841-7070, fax (818) 848-4028.

Photoflex Accessories

Photoflex has added a Litedome Modification Kit as part of its popular Dome Accessory Kit, which is composed of a set of Louvers, a Stripmask and a Circlemask, giving added control over specialized lighting needs without the problem of light-loss. Now it also includes Velcro strips cut to size specifically for modifying Photoflex's Litedome XTC softbox for use with this accessory kit.

The Dome Accessory Kit was originally designed for use with Photoflex's Multidome and Silverdome softboxes. However, customer urgings to make it available for the basic softbox led to the inclusion in all Dome Accessory Kits of the 1.5" Velcro strips; this enables use of the Kits with the Litedome as well as the Multidome and the Silverdome.



The Velcro strips simply attach to the edges of the softbox face, providing adequate surface area for Louvers, Stripmask or Circlemask to attach to the face of the softbox.

Louvers, a set of corrugated plastic slats, are positioned against the face of the softbox to narrow the angle of light. The slats cause the light travel in straight lines, eliminating the presence of "stray" or "scattered" light — unwanted light that leaks onto the background.

The Stripmask is a layer of fabric with a column-shaped cut-out which attaches with Velcro to the face of the softbox. The Stripmask is silver-laminated on the inside, black on the outside, and produces a narrow, direct highlight that won't spill onto a face or background.

The Circlemask is a layer of fabric with a circle cut out, which, like the Stripmask, attaches to the face of the softbox with Velcro; it is also silver-laminated on the inside and black on the outside. The Circlemask produces a graceful, round reflection on the subject, and is ideal for portraiture where a circular catch-light in the eye is desired.

Photoflex also offers a trade-in program whereby one can exchange old, worn softboxes and receive a special trade-in price on a new Photoflex QRC softbox; the company will refurbish the old softboxes and donate them to high school and college photography programs throughout the country. Photographers may trade in any softbox from any manufacturer. Sizes are also completely interchangeable (ex. large for medium), and Photoflex will accept softbox sizes from small (16" x 20"; 20" x 20") all the way up to extra large (54" x 72"). Differing styles can also be fully swapped (ex. Litedome style for Multidome style).

Photoflex, (800) 486-2674, fax (408) 454-9600, e-mail: photoflex@photoflex.com.

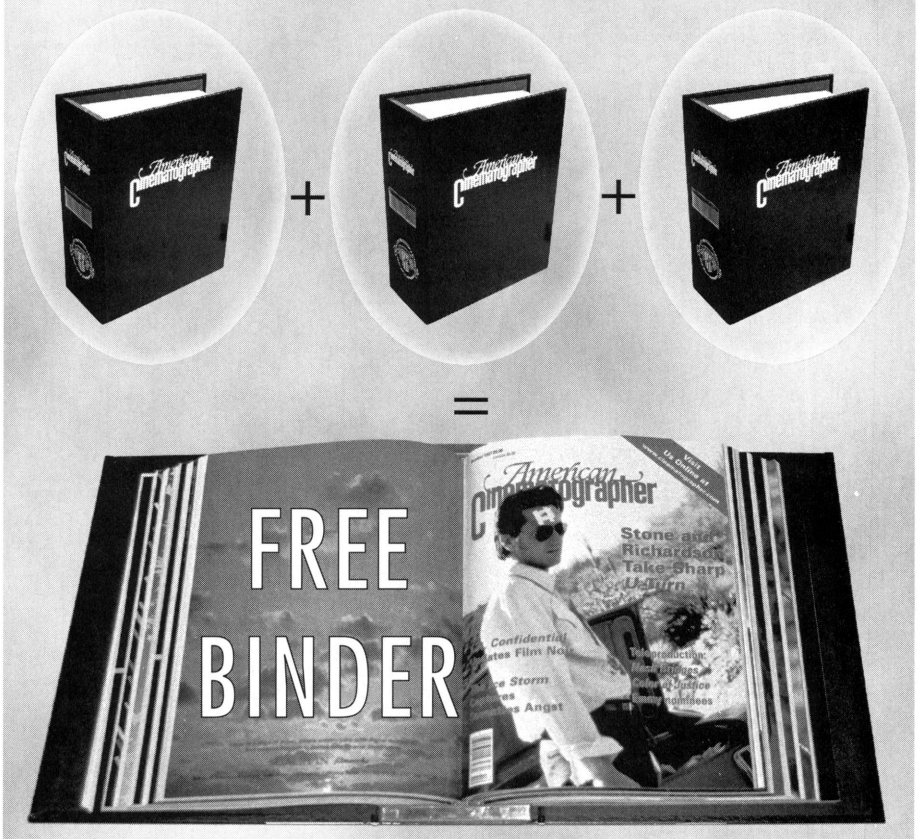
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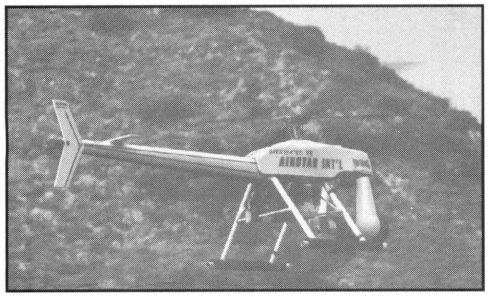
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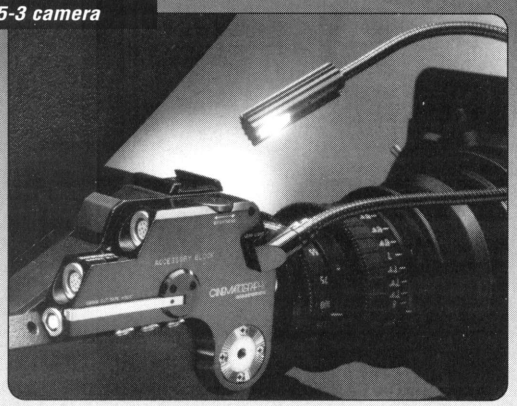
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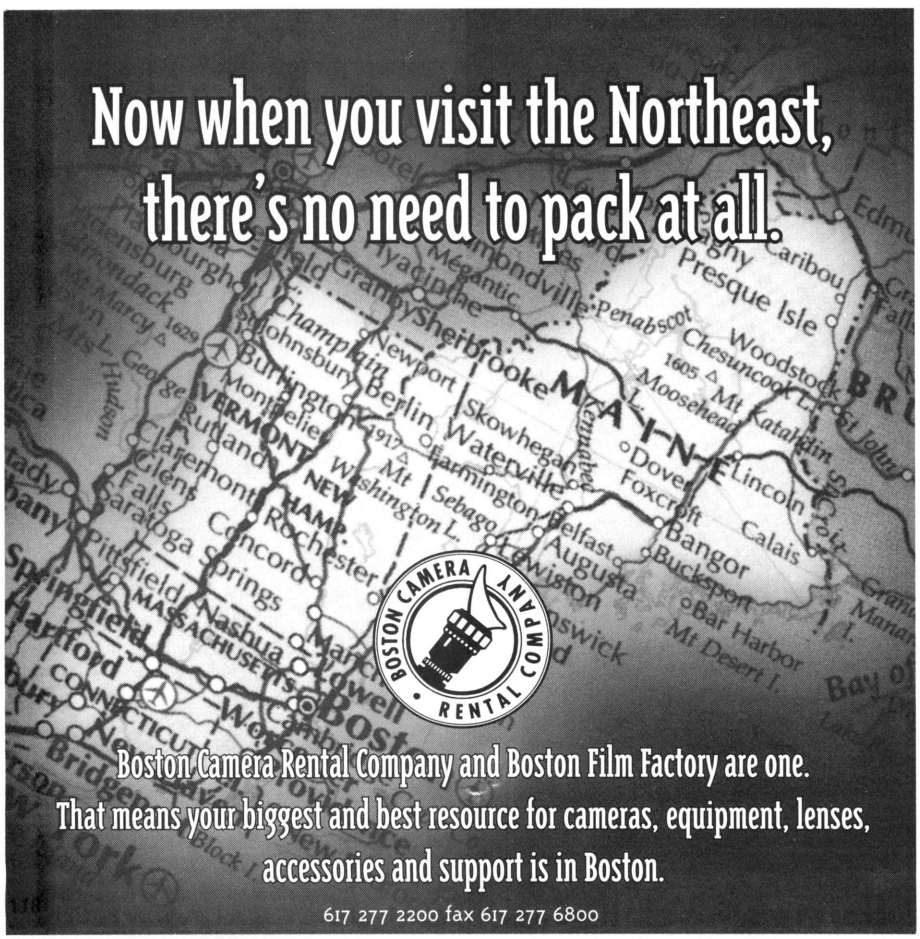
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beam model, the Technoray projection luminaire and the Techopro color-changing fixture. Each source uses a 250W metal-halide lamp rated at 2,000 hours; this provides output comparable to 575W products and results in less heat being generated for the same output. These units combine extended lamp life with a proven photolithographic image projection quality in a compact package best suited for themed environment, entertainment and architectural applications. The high-tech polymers used in their construction offer enhanced aesthetics, reduced weight and quieter operation. The Technoray offers the same features as the Technobeam sans the mirror head assembly. This new fixture allows the optical qualities of the Technobeam and its 3300 dpi photolithography to be utilized in projector form; the dichroic color wheel, rotating litho wheel, effects wheel and other features remain retained. The Technopro is essentially a Technobeam fixtures with mirror assembly removed and the rotating litho wheel replaced with a second color-modifying wheel.

High End Systems, (512) 836-2242, fax (512) 837-5290, e-mail: bruce_jordahl@highend.com.

Softlight Projection

Matthews Studio Equipment introduces its Soft Egg Crate for Butterfly and Overhead Frames. This light control product can project needed soft light into a specific direction without illumination spillage. This unit is available in two weights: the lightweight version is made up of 4 oz. self-extinguishing ripstock nylon; the heavyweight version is constructed of 14 oz. flame-retardant, double vinyl-coated durable fabric — this version is somewhat easier to handle, and suitable for greater situations because it only requires a modest amount of care in handling and storage. These crates are available in 6' x 6', 8 x 8' and 12 x 12' versions.

Matthews Studio Equipment, (800) CE-STAND, fax (818) 843-6715, e-mail: edphil@earthlink.net. ■

Points East

Film/Video Arts Helps Beginning Documentarians

New York City has a valuable, long-established resource for new filmmakers that sounds simply too good to be true.

by Eric Rudolph

Film/Video Arts (F/VA), New York's largest nonprofit media arts foundation, has been giving budding and underfinanced filmmakers access to professional film and video equipment and training since 1968. A yearly $50 fee entitles members to rent such items as a 35mm Arriflex 2-C or 16SR sync-sound camera, an eight-head flatbed editing table, an Avid Media Composer 1000 or a Sony VX1000 digital video camera at prices significantly lower than commercial rates.

It's no surprise, then, that documentarians flock to the foundation, which has helped to launch a large body of important nonfiction work. Recent documentaries whose filmmakers studied at F/VA, or made use of their production and postproduction gear, include *Girls Like Us,* winner of the 1996 Sundance Film Festival's Best Documentary Award; *Synthetic Pleasures* (see Toronto Film Festival coverage, *AC* Feb. '96) which enjoyed an extensive national theatrical release; and *Family Name*, which completed a successful theatrical run and won the 1996 Freedom of Expression Award at Sundance. "Working on smaller projects at F/VA helped me gain the confidence to make my first feature," says *Family Name* director Macky Alston. "I assembled a crew and staff of about 20 people from F/VA who were, without exaggeration, the most talented people I've ever worked with, people with whom I'll continue to collaborate for the rest of my career. And F/VA is the cheapest place I know of to work on films."

Even though Alston used F/VA's technical facilities only occasionally for *Family Name* — his director of photography, Eliot Rockett (*Arresting Gena*) had his own gear and the film was posted elsewhere — the director believes his six-year relationship with the organization was crucial to the success of his first feature. "I took a camera class there that broadened my understanding of shooting and lighting in a way I had only learned secondhand in my training as an editor. This enabled me to communicate with my cinematographer much more effectively," says Alston. "Also, we edited clip reels and trailers at F/VA and used some of their lighting gear. All of these things were important in allowing me to keep the film going, seeing it to completion and marketing it."

Founded in 1968 by Rodger Larson as the Young Filmmakers Foundation, the F/VA actually began as a Lower East Side settlement house project, focusing on recreational, educational and social services for young people, with filmmaking as its unique core activity. Eventually, the project broadened its scope to include video, and the organization became open to all people, regardless of age.

"We started with an old Auricon single-system 16mm newsreel camera," recalls the recently retired Larson. "We used it to produce the Community Action Newsreel, much of which ended up being used on television in one form or another. Then we started getting major support from the New York State Council on the Arts, which helped us enter the pricey world of providing film and video gear at reasonable costs."

The consistent lure of filmmaking fueled F/VA's growth. "Young people are still crazy to make movies, no matter what they eventually move on to later in life," muses Larson. "There's a real romance to moviemaking, especially for the young, which frankly has always surprised us a little."

While the Auricon has long been retired, F/VA maintains a strong emphasis on film, while embracing video and digital technologies as well. "I was reluctant to bring video into the mix; I always thought it was important to keep things centered on film," Larson says. "We still have more film classes than video. Beginners who are determined to work with film rather than tape inevitably end up here."

"Our flatbed film editing tables are always booked," concurs Duana Butler, F/VA's head of development. "The buzz today is seemingly all about video and desktop, but anyone who comes down here will find out that film is still very much alive. There are a lot of people who feel it is important to be able to see and touch film, even if it is only Super 8. Consistent with our roots as a social service foundation, about a third of the films worked on at F/VA are documentaries, and there is a strong commitment to that form here."

Larson notes that documentarian Alan Berliner (*The Family Album, Intimate Stranger, Nobody's Business*), who makes intensely personal, diary-like films, was able to "work exactly the way he wanted with nobody telling him what to do, thanks to his long association with F/VA. Alan's films take forever to make. They are built frame-by-frame, and he works on them day and night for years at a time. Without the facilities and encouragement of F/VA, making these films might have been next to impossible for him."

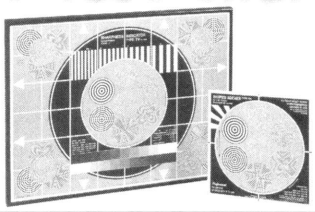
Berlinger himself testifies, "For me, F/VA was fulfilling its mission in its truest sense, making essential services available at affordable prices in a user-friendly, supportive environment. I made good use of their sound transfer and mixing facilities in particular. Also, F/VA's a beehive of activity, with people working on projects all over the place, and it is a nice feeling to be a part of it."

F/VA also co-sponsors the Roy W. Dean Film and Video Grant Program with Studio Film & Tape, one of New York's leading suppliers of short-end film stock to low-budget filmmakers. The program has a strong documentary focus; winners are

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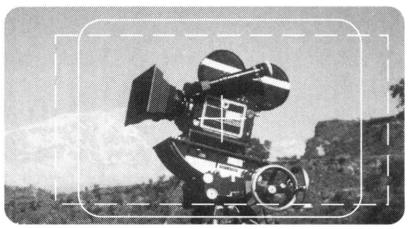
There are both 1000 ft. and 400 ft. displacement type magazines. A new feature is the light valve which allows the operator to direct all the light to the viewing system, or to the video assist, or combo which splits the light between both viewing and video assist.



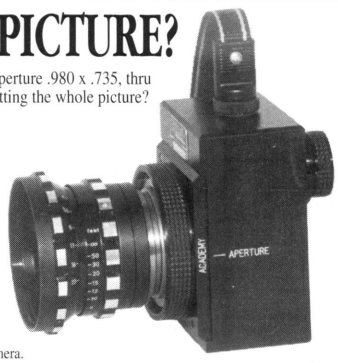
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awarded film stock from Studio Film & Tape and production and postproduction services from F/VA. "The program was named after Studio Film & Tape founder Carole Dean's father, who was a patron of young documentarians," Larson explains.

Each year, the F/VA education department offers 30 beginning, intermediate and advanced classes in film and video production, editing, screenwriting, directing and producing. The department has been offering certificate programs in media production since 1996.

F/VA's Internship Program provides free access to equipment, facilities and courses in exchange for 16 hours of work per week at the foundation. Their Artist/Mentor Project is a series of mentoring workshops led by distinguished media artists, and the Scholarship Assistance Program gives financial assistance to people of color, in the form of partial tuition remission. The foundation's Screening Program offers members the opportunity to screen works for the public.

Basic membership in the F/VA costs $50, but members who pay $75 per year receive discounts averaging 20% on services from leading New York lab DuArt Film and Video and from sound facility Sound One, among many other benefits (including reduced-rate subscriptions to *American Cinematographer*). Low-cost health insurance was also recently made available to members. F/VA is located in an 8,000-square-foot space at 817 Broadway in lower Manhattan; the foundation's telephone number is (212) 673-9361.

As valuable as F/VA's low-cost equipment and training is to beginning filmmakers, few stay around past their first big break. "When folks get successful, we find they'd rather not come to us," Larson notes with a chuckle. "It's a bit of a funky atmosphere, so it's understandable that when you have your druthers you'd rather work somewhere else." ■

Books in Review

by George Turner

The Classic French Cinema, 1930-1960
by Colin Crisp
Indiana University Press, 512 pps., cloth $59.95, paper $16.95

The French movie industry led the world in the early part of the century. As the new age of talking pictures began, however, it faced a desperate struggle to stay alive.

Only belatedly, in about 1934, did France fully feel the crippling effects of the Depression that had all but crushed the rest of post-World War I Europe. By then, the studios were already suffering from the higher cost of making talkies — larger production crews, the increased use of film stock necessary for recording and to accommodate the faster projection speed, and the construction of new facilities. The French filmmakers had not developed a sound system of their own, which forced them, from 1930 forward, to pay usurious royalties (as much as 50 percent of box-office receipts) to manufacturers in Germany or the United States. Other hazards to their survival included the need to equip theaters for sound (another situation involving foreign patents); the loss of foreign markets because of language barriers imposed by sound; taxes; and a general lack of organization.

Then came World War II and the Nazi's 1940 occupation of France; ironically, this event actually brought some coherence to the industry, which had bordered on anarchy during the 1930s.

Crisp, of Griffith University in Brisbane, lays out the facts and figures of 30 years of French cinema, a much different approach from that found in more generalized accounts. Especially worthy is a 56-page chapter titled "Work Practices and Stylistic Change," which examines the evolution of acting, cinematography, production design and editing in France. Nearly half of this chapter is devoted to cinematography, which offers many details about the work of both native and visiting artists, including Eugen Schuftan, Henri Alekan, Curt Courant, Franz Planer, ASC, Harry Stradling, ASC, Louis Page, Claude Renoir, Michel Kelber and others.

Interestingly, the French silent films and the films of the "New Wave," which began in the late 1950s, have received high acclaim, while pictures described by the author as examples of "the classic French cinema" have been increasingly ignored.

We can usually expect something fresh and different to emerge from Australia, and this study is no exception.

A Biographical Handbook of Hispanics and United States Film
by Gary D. Keller, with Estela Keller
Bilingual Press, 250 pps., cloth $49, paper $28

This "handbook" is actually a large-format reference volume packed with pocket biographies of hundreds of Hispanic actors, directors, cinematographers and craftspeople who have worked in North American films. Some are very well known, such as Rita Hayworth, Gilbert Roland, Nestor Almendros, ASC, Dolores del Rio, Luis Buñuel, Ramon Novarro, Lalo Schifrin, Gabriel Figueroa and Rita Moreno, to name just a few. Others are lesser-known but equally interesting men and women involved in U.S. films from 1894 to the present.

There are about 300 portraits and scene stills, including some rarities from bilingual films which flourished briefly in the early years of talking pictures. The latter afford glimpses of Ramon Pereda and Rosita Moreno in the Richard Arlen and Fay Wray roles in *El dios del mar (The Sea God),* Jose Crespo playing Chester Morris' part in *El Presidio (The Big House),* and Lupita Tovar and Barry Norton in the Helen Chandler and David Manners roles in *Dracula.*

A companion volume to a 1994 publication, *Hispanics and United States Film: An Overview and Handbook,* this tome is a nifty addition to anyone's "things I never knew before" bookshelf.

De Toth by De Toth
by Andre de Toth with Anthony Slide
Faber & Faber, London, 182 pps., paper, $15.95

Andre de Toth cuts a striking figure: suntanned and broad-shouldered, he has close-cropped hair and wears a patch over his left eye. "I may look older than I really am, because life has stepped on my face often enough, with hobnail boots, to leave some traces," he says.

De Toth was born in Hungary and directed five pictures there, beginning in 1939. Since then, he has made movies in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Denmark, Spain, Austria, Libya, Yugoslavia and Morocco. A man of massive intellect, de Toth is a gifted sculptor and has a writer's grasp of American lingo. He has directed almost every type of dramatic picture, and became so expert at making Westerns with the likes of Joel McCrea, Randolph Scott, Gary Cooper and Kirk Douglas that he was nicknamed "Tex."

De Toth is famed as the one-eyed man who made the best 3-D feature of all, *House of Wax* (1953). He also made the first picture in which a black man sat

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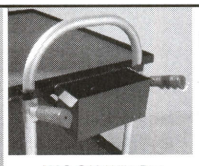
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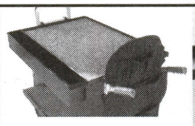


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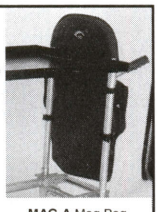
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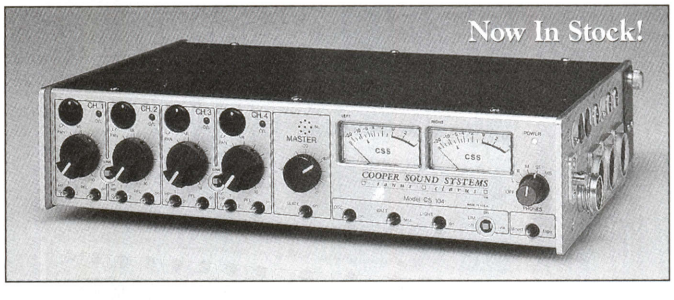


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which anticipated the United Nations and the Nuremberg Trials, and one of the best early "adult" Westerns, *Ramrod* (1947). He even directed the first feature to use a full-spectrum-sensitive, single-strip negative running in an ordinary black-and-white camera: the WarnerColor Western *Carson City* (1952). As for *film noir,* he made three of the finest: *Dark Waters* (1944), *Pitfall* (1948) and *Crime Wave* (1954). De Toth reveals here that he has done a lot of work on other directors' films, including *Since You Went Away, Lawrence of Arabia* and *Superman.*

He is also a whale of a raconteur who scatters well-turned phrases with the ease of Oscar Wilde. Some of the words are rough, but the writing is smooth, direct and witty. Much of the discourse is addressed to "Herr Future Director," and reflects the wisdom of an old pro. "The art of filmmaking is a collective effort," writes de Toth. "Every single frame is the most important part of the whole works, born out of the combined contributions of various, equally important talents and crafts, with the editors and the cameramen at the top of the list."

Good talk and recommended reading. ■

Note to Book Lovers:

The always-informative American Society of Cinematographers website (www.cinematographer.com) currently presents a "recommended reading" list compiled by ASC member John Bailey, who offers his own comments and insights about each book's merits. Included among these selections are the following titles:

Painting with Light,
by John Alton
Billy Bitzer, His Story,
by Billy Bitzer
The Parade's Gone,
by Kevin Brownlow
My Last Sigh,
by Luis Buñuel
Diary of a Film,
by Jean Cocteau

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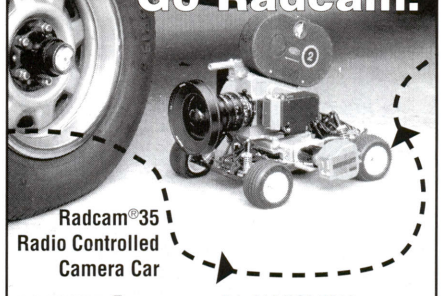
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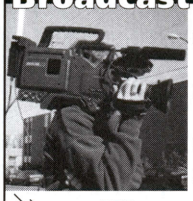
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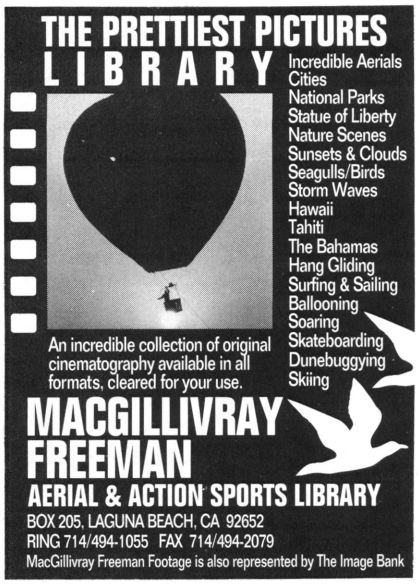
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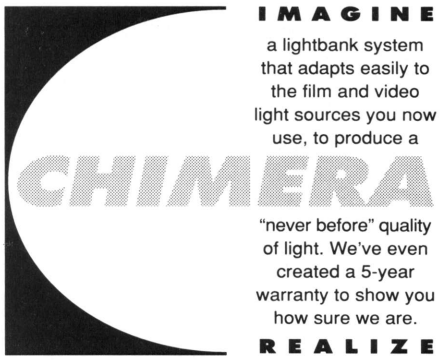
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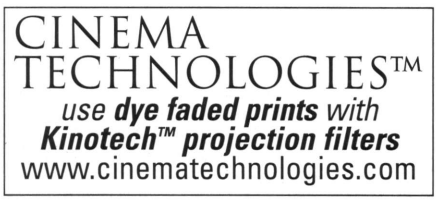


















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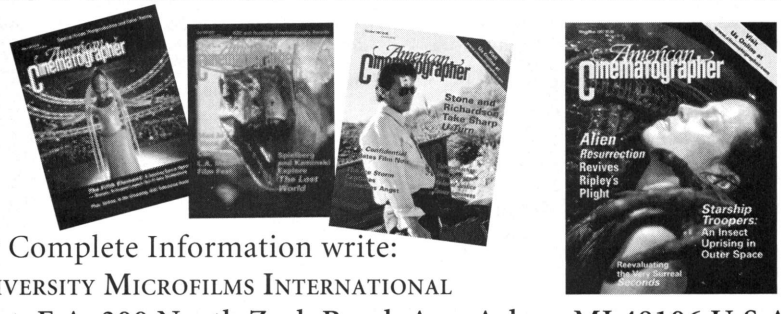
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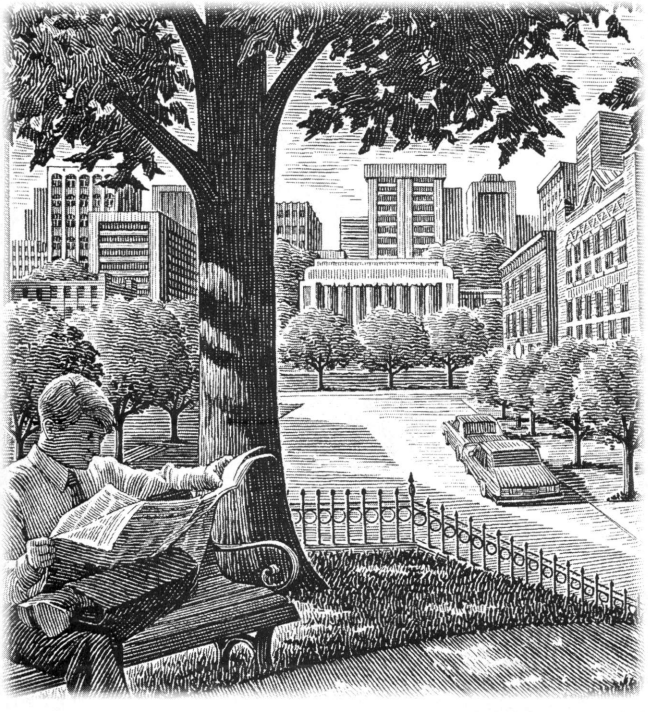
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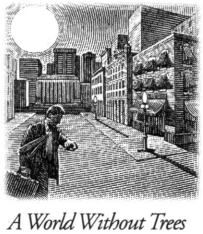
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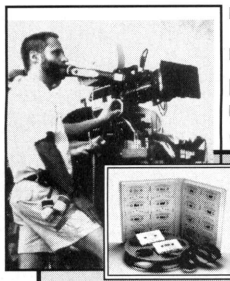
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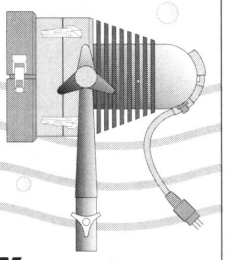
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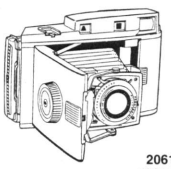
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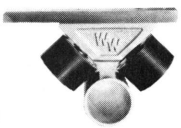
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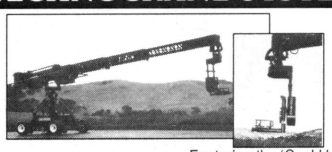
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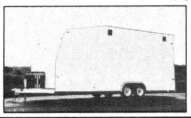
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From the Clubhouse



Kibbe Joins ASC

The latest cameraman to join the active ranks of the ASC is L.A. native Gary B. Kibbe. An alumnus of Hollywood High School, Kibbe attended Valley College, where he majored in art — specifically, watercolor, oil and pastel painting. His appreciation for naturescapes and the detail one must lend to their color, composition and framing led to Kibbe's interest in cinematography. (An accomplished artist, he has sold paintings in Laguna Beach and Santa Fe, New Mexico.) At the time of his graduation, however, studio camera departments were open to trained professionals only; Kibbe thus began working at Warner Bros. in the mailroom, progressing to casting and eventually the camera department.

Award-winning cinematographer Burnett Guffey, ASC gave Kibbe his first break on a camera crew, and hired him to work as second assistant on *Suppose They Gave A War and Nobody Came*. Kibbe then served as an operator and assistant for ASC members Fred Koenekamp, Sven Nykvist, Ernie Laszlo, Harry Stradling, Laszlo Kovacs and Dean Cundey, as well as Australian cameraman Dean Semler. He was later hired as a full-fledged director of photography by director John Carpenter. Kibbe and Carpenter have since enjoyed a fruitful working relationship which includes the Showtime miniseries *Body Bags* and the feature films *Prince of Darkness*, *They Live*, *In the Mouth of Madness*, *Village of the Damned* and *Escape from L.A.* His other credits include *Love Struck*, *RoboCop 3* and *Double Dragon*. Kibbe recently completed work on *Vampires*, his latest collaboration with Carpenter.

The ASC also recently inducted the following Associate Members:

Joseph N. Tawil is president of the Great American Market and a 32-year film industry veteran. The Brooklyn native attended Carnegie Mellon University, and after graduation did a stint in the U.S. Army. In 1963, he became a sales engineer for Kliegl Brothers Universal Electric Stage Lighting Company, where he helped coordinate the design and application of theatrical and architectural lighting equipment. Two years later, he joined Berkey Colortran, and in 1969 was appointed company president. During his presidential tenure, Tawil was instrumental in developing and producing the first deep-dyed polyester color filter materials. In 1975, Tawil left Berkey Colortran to form The Great American Market, where he created and introduced "blackwrap" some eight years later.

Milton Keslow is a consultant and board member of the L.A.-based rental company Keslow Camera Corporation (KCC) and founder of the broadcast equipment rental firm Keslow Television Industries (KTI), which is based in New York City. The Brooklyn native is 43-year film industry veteran who began his career in 1954 at Camera Equipment Company. He subsequently co-founded General Camera Corp. In the late Sixties, working under the General Camera umbrella, he launched General Cine Manufacturing Corp., a Peekskill, NY-based company that manufactured 16mm cameras and accessories for the newsreel business. In the Seventies, he became a partner in Cine-Pro Corp., an L.A.-based movie equipment rental company, and was instrumental in founding General Ray-Fin Corporation, one of the first organizations to introduce and rent highly successful horizontal flat-bed editing machines. The next generation of Keslows is also involved in the movie business: KCC is owned by his son, Robert, and KTI was co-founded with his son, Marc.

Jack Bonura is vice president of Tiffen's Motion Picture and Television Division and has 14 years of movie industry experience. He earned a B.F.A. in Communications and English from Niagara University, a Master's degree in Business Management from Dowling University and a Master's degree in Communication Arts (with a concentration in film production) from the New York Institute of Technology. As president of Local 644 and regional president of Local 600, he has given some rather interesting seminars on the filtration field; Bonura has also lectured at NYU, AFI, Columbia University, the International Photographers Guild, British Kinematography, ITVA, SMPTE, SMPTE Australia and many other international sites. Bonura is a member of SMPTE, ITVA, the ASC Awards Committee and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, for which he has served on the Blue Ribbon panel of judges.

Richard Aschman is president and chief officer of Professional Motion Imaging and vice president of Eastman Kodak Company. Born and bred in Columbus, Ohio, he earned a marketing degree from Ohio State University. In 1972, Aschman began his Kodak career in the firm's business systems marketing division. In 1982, he was named business planning director for equipment and systems for the business imaging systems division; there, he developed the business plan and strategies which led Kodak into its digital imaging business.

In late 1984, he was appointed assistant to the chairman and president of Eastman Kodak. About a year and a half later, Aschman became director and vice president of corporate alliances, a newly-created position in which he developed and managed Kodak's corporate business partnering and alliance activities worldwide. In 1991, Aschman relocated to Tokyo as the regional business general manager and vice president for Kodak's Commercial Image Group in the Asia Pacific Region. While in Asia, he initiated a number of joint ventures, including one between the Ministry of Electronics, People's Republic of China and Image Tek of Hong Kong. ■

WRAP SHOT



Flaherty, sitting by his trusty Akeley, meets Samoan beauties while filming *Moana.*

A true artist of the documentary film was Robert Flaherty, an Irish-American from Michigan, who earned fame the hard way by filming Eskimos in the Arctic. His first attempt in 1913-16 ended disastrously when he made the mistake of smoking while editing the nitrate negative. After recovering from near-fatal burns, Flaherty returned to the Arctic and photographed the great, harrowing *Nanook of the North,* which Pathé released in 1922. Jesse L. Lasky, himself an adventurous expeditioner, then commissioned Flaherty to make a travel feature. The filmmaker and his wife, Frances, went to the remote, unspoiled Samoan island of Savai'i, taking with them a new Akeley "pancake" camera and a Prizmacolor two-color camera. There, they made another feature-length silent film, *Moana: A Romance of the Golden Age.*

The photography of *Nanook* is remarkable for its bitter realism, but much of it is a trial, optically. *Moana,* however, is astonishingly beautiful. It was filmed on panchromatic film, which was then being used only sparingly for movies. It was said that the Prizmacolor camera broke down, which led Flaherty to shoot with the Akeley using the panchromatic film furnished for the color process. Maybe so, but probably not. His use of color filters to dramatize and bring out the values of skies and foliage is too artistic and craftsmanlike to lend credence to the idea that he was a stranger to the use of pan film.

The biggest problem with *Moana* commercially was that it had no dramatic conflict because the islanders lived an idyllic life. The hoped-for "struggle for existence" was nonexistent. The picture is filled with swimming, tree climbing, fishing, canoeing, and pig-hunting. The only ordeal is a ritual body-tattooing of a youth, which is depicted at length in minutest detail. This was staged especially for the film, for the age-old practice was dying out. *Moana* was prepared in 11 reels for a roadshow release, but the studio executives had it cut to seven reels for a normal release in 1926. It did above-average business.

Did Flaherty believe in staging scenes to add drama to a documentary? You be the judge: "One often has to distort a thing," he said, "to catch its true value." ■

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